MEASURE OF A BADASS

a roleplaying game
by Jim Dagg

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Measure of a Badass
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This work is an open beta test – please give it a shot, rules as written. When you're finished, please fill out the playtest questionnaire (which can be found at bit.ly/moabpq). If you have any questions or comments, let us know on the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/measure.of.a.badass
or email measure.of.a.badass@gmail.com.

Fight the good fight!

Dedication

To Heather Brooks, my love and compatriot, for listening to my rambling, adulation, obsession, doubt, and finally pride in my work. Thank you for listening to all of my crap, and sticking with me all this time. Without you, none of this would be possible.

To Jenn Meyer, who broke the mold of everything I expected this game to be about, and helped me realize its true potential as more than just a red-blooded gun-fest. Every slinky red dress, unexpected jump and dodge, and every maneuver in the shadows made it deeper, broader, more exciting than ever. And thank you for sitting through revision after revision of OneShot, PSICOM, and everything that came before, and everything that is to come.

To Dan Baizel, probably the best damn devil's advocate there ever was for rules and mechanics. I often disagreed with you, fought hard to keep my precious jewels of ideas as they were, and then, weeks, months, sometimes years later, came around to realize you were right all along. My thanks, and my apologies.

To my father, who exposed me to action cinema – to a place where, some way, somehow, the actions of a few good people could make everything right in the world, if only for a little while. I wish you could have played this with me.

To Zac Reed, Rachel Armstrong, Erik Carter, and the rest of the University of Dayton Fantasy and Science Fiction Appreciation Club, for providing me a forum to test, refine, and promote this game and my other works over the course of years.

And finally, to Avalanche Studios and Eidos Interactive, for Just Cause 2*, the high-octane open-world action shooter whose flirtation with the very edge of the laws of reality and physics spawned the idea for an action-inspired RPG. Thirty minutes of play on an old, broken laptop inspired four years of hard work, and I couldn't be happier about it.*

To be a Badass

Does anyone remember the days when heroes were good, bad guys were bad, and we celebrated unrestrained, simple badassery?

These days, the rules are more like guidelines. The line between good and bad is blurred, and heroes who try to act the part get fired, arrested, or worse. "Don't be a hero" is a line ingrained into everyone who walks into police and military training. The enemy has no face; they're just people, with scattered, erratic agendas and unclear leadership. One man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. The difference between action stories of the 1980s and 1990s, and those of today, is that writers and audiences were willing to suspend their disbelief and buy into the black and white depictions. Guys like Rambo or the forces of G.I. Joe could show up and gun down the obviously evil villains, save the hostages, and win the day, to the elation of their superiors back home.

What if we could transport the freewheeling, unabashed *badassery* of those old yarns into the modern day?

In *Measure of a Badass*, the protagonists are part of a defined body – whether government, private, or even freelance – who stand as the sworn enemies of criminal or terrorist organizations. These organizations have a face, and a name, and their personnel and assets are expendable. When the villains of the week show up to cause havoc and chaos (whether for their gain or its own perverse sake), the heroes unite to take them down a peg, guns blazing the whole while. The villains are known. They're members of an evil organization with its own ideology. This organization could be the same from mission to mission, or the protagonists could take down multiple factions of bad guys as they defend those they have sworn to protect – a nation, the world, or otherwise.

The player characters, Badasses, are pinnacles, falling into one of the twelve heroic Archetypes. Badasses are uniquely capable people, able of attempting any task in front of them, but a member of an appropriate archetype is the best at what they do. Anyone can wield a machine gun, but the Soldier can stand toe to toe against a dozen armed assailants and survive without a scratch. Others can be sexy, audacious, and glib, but no one turns heads like the Smooth Operator. You get the idea. No two player characters can be members the same archetype – versatility is key to the success of your team. Don't forget to cross train! Nothing is worse than finding the computer data you were supposed to alter, but being unable to do it because your 1337 H4x0r took a grievous hit two scenes back. And since your enemy will stop at nothing to see you dead or captured – make sure you have some capability in a fight. Be prepared for your enemy to bring some serious firepower – waves of infantry, cars, planes, tanks, sneaks, subtlety, hostages, anything. The Badass's one true calling is to shine in the face of overwhelming odds, and to look awesome doing it.

In a world of gray, a hero is a bright white beacon of hope. When there's no one else to turn to, the last bastion is a hero. A Badass. You.

Do you have what it takes?

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About the Game

Measure of a Badass is a tabletop roleplaying game. What we're here to do is to tell a story reminiscent of the best action movies and television shows. Everyone at the table acts out, via dialogue and description, characters in an action story; saying what they say, describing what they do. When a character attempts to do something where the outcome is important and uncertain, the rules of the game (and the roll of the dice) step in to determine what happens. Missions are set before the heroes; *the heroes' (and therefore the players') ultimate goal is to accomplish their mission and save the day from certain peril, in the most awesome way possible*.

There are two jobs to do. One person is designated the *Game Master* (GM). The GM serves three roles: the *director,* the *cameraman,* and *the supporting cast*.

- As the ***director***, the GM is in charge of arbitrating the world and the rules (making rulings where necessary) and setting up missions and adversaries that serve as the backdrop for the action in play. The GM is *not* the players' adversary, just the arbiter of the action, like a director. And, like a director, whichever way the story goes, the GM endeavors to make the resulting action blow the audience out of their seats.
- As the ***cameraman***, he serves as the players' eyes and ears, reflecting what they see and sense, *honestly and completely*, answering questions about what's going on around them. This information is true and complete, like what's captured by the movie camera, but it also focuses on the things that are important to the story: not the incidental stuff, like long, boring trips or logistical planning.
- As the ***supporting cast***, the GM plays the roles of non-protagonist characters, who serve as the players' allies and adversaries; he plays them authentically, contrasting but never overshadowing the stars.

The remaining people are *players*. *They're the* ***actors in the starring roles***; these people portray a single character, a Badass, who serves in an elite cadre of agents standing as the premier line of defense against the forces of evil, crime, terror, and destruction. The players cooperate to defeat the threat brought to light during play. The Badasses are focus of the action; the flow of the mission revolves around them and their choices.

Everyone*, players and GM alike,* ***is part of the script team*** – telling an awesome action story, where the heroes (usually) succeed against impossible odds to surmount a dangerous threat, letting everyone, people and characters, players and GM both, have their chance to shine. *I cannot stress enough* how important it is to *give everyone screen time and moments of glory*. If everyone cooperates to make suggestions and build awesome scenes, everyone wins, regardless of how the story turns out. If anyone is selfish and demands too much screen time, neutralizes another person's contributions, or starts arguments to gain advantages for their characters, the flow and the fun are lost, and everyone loses. Similarly, if the GM is clumsy with the spotlight and forgets to give someone a moment to shine, they're bitter, there's a critical part of the story missing, and everyone loses. It's on *everyone's* shoulders, not just the GM's, to make sure the game is played fair, from both a rules and a social standpoint.

The game plays best with a party of three to four players, plus one GM. Five is about the maximum, and even then you start running into problems with screen time. The game will work with two players, though cooperative abilities (and possibly nominating and voting for **Badass Points**, later) aren't quite as effective. I've provided a set of rules adjustments for one-player play if you really have no other option, but I highly recommend at least two player characters (see **One-on-one Play**, later).

What Do We Need?

The group as a whole will need at least one copy of the *Measure of a Badass* rulebook and at least as many 10-sided dice ("d10s") as there are people at the table – one for each player, plus at least one for the GM. (The GM will have an easier time running scenarios with multiple non-player characters or opponents if he has several dice and can roll them at the same time – ten should be a comfortable maximum.)

Each player will also need the three- to four-page *playbook* devoted to their Archetype. The playbook consists of:

- A character sheet – a place to record the character's abilities, equipment, and statistics
- A quick-start mechanics guide – a quick synopsis of the basic rules
- The section from the Archetypes chapter about their chosen Archetype, and what benefits it grants to the player

The GM will need a few index cards or some scrap paper to record mission and task objectives, and possibly also enemy statistics (such as health or other notes) in play. He may also want to consider a dry-erase board or mat and markers to present quickly-drawn maps, battle positions, and other rough visual information.

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How Do We Play?

The process of running a *Measure of a Badass* storyline is pretty straightforward, particularly if you've played other tabletop RPGs before. *Measure of a Badass* can tell two main types of stories:

- A stand-alone, episodic mission, like a TV episode or movie.
- A long-form story arc involving the repeated plots of a master villain, like a season – or series – of a TV show.

In either case, the stages of play are similar.

Greenlighting: Determine the setting

The group collectively determines the nature of the setting of the story. Setting, of course, includes time and place: historical or future, where in the world (or galaxy, or universe), the nature of political powers, and so forth. The rule set, and the Gear chapters, are written in the context of a near future real-world setting (around 2015-2025); your desires may vary. Adjusting for setting is usually pretty simple, unless you go pretty far into the past or future; gear, and even archetypes, might not fit settings too far outside the realm of near-present Earth. (There are ways to accommodate this: see **Going Full Custom** toward the end of the book.)

The group then establishes the organization – if any – that the protagonists work for. Is it a nation's government, or a multinational body (like NATO or the UN)? A non-governmental organization (NGO), which secretly executes strike missions? Are they independent contractors or mercenaries, and if so, who are their prime customers? The choices are many, but what they have in common is that the player characters are given a high degree of latitude (and minimal oversight) in how the mission is executed. (See **Greenlighting** for details.)

Establish the mission

Every action movie has a villain – whether this is an individual, or a malevolent group, who are doing something the player team's agency wants stopped. In *Measure of a Badass*, we call the person at the head of the organization a Mastermind. The GM determines his goals and methods; does he want the world to burn? Does he want money and power? Does he want his nation to stand victorious? The nature of the Mastermind determines both the kind of missions the players will undergo, as well as how the Mastermind handles himself as a character in the action. (See **Episodes and Overarching Plot** for more.)

With the Mastermind worked out, the GM plans a mission that the Badass team will undertake. Mission planning in *Measure of a Badass* is quick and light, since the nature of the game relies heavily on improvisation. It's a short process (about an hour if you have an idea in mind) that creates a general framework for how a mission will go, rather than planning moment-to-moment details. (See **Planning Missions**.) If this is a one-off mission, the Boss of the enemy threat is calling the shots. A story arc will see the action build from minor machinations to the final showdown with the Mastermind himself over the course of successive missions.

Build the team

When it comes time to sit down and play the mission, the GM delivers a briefing. Based on the briefing and expected threat, the players either select or create Badass characters they want to portray for the mission. A player can have as many characters as she wants to generate; however, each player portrays a single character during a mission. This results in a rotating cast of characters you'd see in action shows like *Mission: Impossible* or *G.I. Joe*. See **Mission Procedure**, **Constructing a Badass**, and **Archetypes** for more on how to handle character creation.

Execute

Once the players have selected a Badass, either previously used or freshly created, and the mission briefing is delivered, they choose their loadout of gear for the mission, including Weapons, Armor, and Gadgets. **Gearing Up** has more on how that process works.

At last, the mission goes down. The Badass team enters the first *scene* (which, for the most part, means what you expect – see **Playing the Mission** for more on this process), acting and reacting to the world around them to stop the disaster plotted by the Mastermind. Players state their character's intended course of action, in real-world terms; in response, the GM will do one of two things:

- Accept the action as stated (it succeeds automatically) and simply tell the player what happens.
- If the outcome is in doubt, call for a die roll to determine the effects. You'll roll a ten-sided die (d10) and add one of your four *stats* (and sometimes a modifier or two), hoping to hit a target number. Any action that requires a roll is called a *task;* characters accomplish tasks, either one after another or taking turns, until we figure out whether they succeeded or not. This is the core of the game; see **Taking Action** for how task resolution works.

The camera and action follow the player team from scene to scene, fight to fight, place to place, until they finally discover the Boss of the operation (or the Mastermind himself!) for the final showdown. Whether they are successful or not remains to be seen, but it'll be awesome regardless of how the chips fall.

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What Makes Badass Different, and Why Are We Playing?

If you've ever played a tabletop roleplaying game before, like *Dungeons & Dragons*, any of the White Wolf games, or others, you'll be familiar with the procedure that *Measure of a Badass* puts out; the lines between player and GM are for the most part traditional, and the game is played in a "simulationist" style, with a roughly one-to-one relation between a character's action and the game's mechanical resolution.

Measure of a Badass has a few trappings that aren't quite as common, however, which relate to the tropes and narrative flow of the action genre:

- *The players/protagonists drive the action, and the action keeps moving.* Modules and missions for some RPGs are well planned out. People are in certain places at certain times, traps are in a particular location, and the key to the boss monster's lair door is in one place and one place only. If it's not in the module or the dungeon description, it isn't there. It's a great way for simulating fighting in a realistic world, but *Badass* is a little different – we're simulating *cinematic* reality and causality. In *Badass*, the missions are just lists of places, people, things, and setpieces. The players describe what they do and where they go, and if they're in a place where something in the mission description makes sense, it shows up. Played well, missions in *Measure of a Badass* never reach a dead end, since a fight or the sudden appearance of a clue can always happen. Remember that everyone at the table writes the screenplay, not just the GM!
- *If an action is at all possible for a character, the character can attempt it.* Action characters do crazy things; outrunning boulders, cracking database servers in sixty seconds with a gun against their head, leaping between moving cars, and no-look shots through a mirror. Player characters (and important enemies) have Archetypes, which define their schtick and special abilities – if something is at all possible for them and their skill set, the character can make a roll. (That doesn't mean the roll will be easy!) We're aiming for over-the-top; if someone asks "can I do this?", think about the kind of action cinema you're trying to simulate, and make the call –you'll find that the answer is almost never just a flat "no". However, there are always caveats and risks to every wild and crazy action the characters undertake.
- *The dice don't get rolled unless something is at stake.* When is the last time you saw an action show where the team just twiddles their thumbs while trying something over and over again until they get it right – picks the lock, opens the door or starts the car with a bad ignition – with no pressure? In *Badass*, when something goes right, the action moves forward. When it goes wrong, usually one of two things is true. One, the rest of the team is usually engaged in something else – a firefight, trying to keep the zombies from swarming the place, something that makes time essential. Or two, they subsequently find themselves in trouble as a result of the failure – the lock breaks loudly and summons a guard, the car is out of gas. Therefore, don't roll the dice unless there's something that could go wrong. Even if the outcome of a character's action isn't certain, if the result isn't important to the story, it just happens. If a hero is picking a lock, no one's around, and there's nothing to stop her from working until she's finished, she just does it, no questions asked, no roll required.
- *Heroes only die when they sacrifice themselves for their cause or their allies.* How much would it suck if Rambo had been sniped and killed by a Mujahedeen rifleman on his way to the final confrontation with Col. Zaysen, and the credits rolled? I mean, maybe if he got shot, blacked out, and then found himself tied to a tank barrel, with Zaysen monologuing his superiority; that would be awesome. On the flip side, though, heroes do sometimes sacrifice themselves for the greater good of the team, or the good of the mission. Therefore, Badasses cannot die – only be incapacitated – unless the player decides to go out with a bang. (See **Sacrifice** under **Health** for a more thorough explanation.)
- *There are no shades of gray.* This game evokes the action films and shows of the 1980s and 1990s – the times when the good guys were good, the bad guys were bad, and stopping them in their tracks is not only the right thing to do, but it makes the world a markedly better place for doing so. *Measure of a Badass* is not a game where the players are embroiled in a big conspiracy, acting against their superiors and each other in the shadows; your friend is your friend. Your enemy is your enemy. The player characters won't point guns at each other, unless they then immediately point them at someone else. No question about it – get in, get the job done, get out, and celebrate by grabbing a burger with the President. This is discussed more in **Playing the Mission**, specifically the bullet point **Keep the drama constructive**. The point is, we're not trying to be sneaky with each other here. We're here to *kick ass and have fun doing it*.

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PART ONE
Playing the Game

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Greenlighting (Game and Setting Creation)

While running the adversaries and planning missions proper is in the GM's hands, the story in *Measure of a Badass* is written by *everyone*, not just the GM. To create a game where everyone brings their best to the table, the group needs to put together a setting and scenario that everyone at the table loves and wants to play out.

We're all here to play a game. The GM must commit to playing the game well and treating the players (and their characters) fairly, respecting their choices and integrity, and not taking control by fiat. The players must commit to showing up and playing the game – that means engaging with the story and the rules by building characters that fit with the concepts of an action game, and the overarching story determined by the group as a whole.

What makes a good *Badass* game?

Action films span countless sub-genres (sci-fi action, fantasy action, crime action), star a wide variety of people from an even wider variety of walks of life. What makes them uniquely *action*, though, is:

- They star capable, interesting, proactive people…
- who aren't afraid to get into trouble and put life and limb on the line…
- against capable, interesting, proactive adversaries…
- to accomplish a meaningful goal.

These concepts are pretty lofty, so let's discuss each one in detail.

Action stories star capable, interesting, proactive people

Each of these terms means something important.

A *capable* hero is someone who, in general, is good at what they do. They undertake the task at hand prepared – whether that means having the right tools for the job, or being able to work without them. When they make mistakes, it's not because they're bumbling fools, or because they didn't understand the risks. They're the kind of person you *want* to get involved in the crisis at hand, because they're highly likely to resolve it for the better. Badasses can attempt just about anything and have a decent chance at pulling it off – running down a thin cable suspended high in the air while shooting down mooks on all sides, hacking the maximum-security Gibson supercomputer, or jumping a 50-foot span in a heavy bus loaded with passengers. These aren't the kind of people who show up wearing three neckties, trip over their own feet trying to make a simple jump over a puddle, or don't notice the sound of a tank rolling in.

An *interesting* hero is someone whose job involves tasks and scenarios beyond the pale. It isn't just J. Random Salaryman who happens to get into a bar fight; it's J. Random Salaryman who gets "hired" by a boat full of gangsters to be a hostage negotiator. It's not the traffic cop making a routine stop; it's the SWAT cop who disarms a bomb strapped to the underside of the aforementioned bus in motion without breaking (much of) a sweat.

A *proactive* hero is someone who gets the job done. They make things happen, not have things happen to them. I mean, they might get involved because something happens to them – the SWAT guy's daughter gets kidnapped, say – but after that, they go looking for trouble, running *toward* the crisis rather than away from it. Which brings us to…

Action heroes aren't afraid to get into trouble

When a crisis occurs, or when their goal is in sight, action heroes aren't afraid to get going and dive headfirst into the action. This doesn't mean foolhardy, unthinking brute force; instead, an action hero would rather get in and get the job done than stay home. The action will inevitably involve hair-raising danger, physical combat, and a risk to life and limb. A brush with death is just another day at the office. A smart hero will avoid getting into a fight unnecessarily, but a character that is afraid of guns, or combat, or just refuses to undertake a mission isn't really a practical character for Badass.

There's nothing saying you won't ever find yourself saying "my character wouldn't go on this mission" – that's totally legit! Just set the character aside for now, build a new one that has some buy-in to the mission at hand (which should only take a few minutes), and play on! (See **Troupe Play** for more details on how this works.) It's your job as a player to bring a character to the table that will be able to engage with the mission at hand, rather than grind the scenario to a halt through steadfast refusal.

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Their adversaries are just as capable

If the A-Team were up against the Keystone Kops, it would be an absolute curb stomp. Curb stomps aren't interesting to watch – when you know five minutes in what the ending will be, there's no tension or suspense, and we might as well fast forward to the predictable ending, yawn, and go outside or something. While *individual* adversaries (particularly Mooks) may be essentially a non-threat, the overlord controlling them as pawns *en masse* have big plans. They're one step ahead of the world's military, law enforcement, and international powers, or they wouldn't be a threat worthy of the intervention of Badasses.

They pursue a meaningful goal

Heroes don't just beat up the bad guys for the fun of it (although there may be that, too); they have a purpose in mind. In a lot of cases, action missions are the heroes' line of work – military, law enforcement, spies, or even mercenaries take home a paycheck at the end of the day. *Heroes*, however, aren't typically the people who are just in it for the money; often, there's a loftier goal. The A-Team brought home a paycheck, but their purpose was to protect the weak and downtrodden that society wouldn't. G.I. Joe protected the world from the terrorist organization Cobra and its many, *many* wings.

Building a Story Arc

Everyone, the GM and players together, should sit down for a planning session and decide what game they're planning on playing. Everyone's opinions are important, here; the GM knows what kind of worlds they are capable of building and what they enjoy running, but the players need buy-in so that they can engage with the game at hand. Together, you're going to determine the *setting* and *style* of the game that's about to happen. They work together, so think about the setting you're going for, and then determine the genre that your game will fit into based on that. If you really just want to play a particular genre of game, you can start with that and work backward, finding a setting to match. Either approach works.

Style

Action cinema comes in quite a few subgenres. They have a few defining characteristics, and a place on the sliding scale between realism and comedy. Here are a few examples of subgenres that fit well within the scope of *Measure of a Badass*:

- Action **thriller**: The most straightforward genre to run in *Measure of a Badass*, the action thriller is defined by an emphasis on combat, explosions, and setpieces, involving a fight against a clearly evil antagonist. Action is turned up to eleven, and realism often takes a backseat, but it's played straight – comedy is rare. Examples include *Under Siege, Air Force One, The Rock*, *xXx,* and the *Die Hard* series.
- Action **comedy**: Almost a sub-sub-genre of the action thriller, the action comedy, as the term suggests, is an action film with a heavy dose of comedy (though generally not to the point of slapstick), but still featuring the same tropes, explosions, and setpieces you'd expect in a thriller. The levity brought on by frequent laughs strikes a counterbalance with the extreme circumstances the heroes deal with. Examples include *Bad Boys*, *Rush Hour*, and *Beverly Hills Cop*.
- Action **adventure**: Heroes explore exotic locales, discovering their secrets and battling threats from within and without. Generally, while the action adventure blurs the lines somewhat with the action thriller, the action adventure brings greater focus to the setting, showing the heroes solving puzzles and navigating a hostile landscape. Examples include *Star Wars*, *Serenity*, the *Indiana Jones* series, and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*.
- Action **horror**: A supernatural, alien, or otherworldly threat shakes the heroes and their world in an action horror film. Action horror can be suspenseful, full of white-knuckled tension, or more overt and gory. In any case, the heroes in an action horror film must find a way to deal with a foe they aren't trained or equipped to handle. Examples include *Aliens, Army of Darkness*, *Resident Evil, Predator, Planet Terror,* and *Constantine*.
- **Spy-fi**: The heroes of a spy film are agents working for a government intelligence organization who must take violent action against an enemy state, terrorist, or criminal threat. Spy action films tend to veer away somewhat from the true nature of espionage; rather than paranoia about leaving traces, giving one's identity away, or similar, often espionage becomes a backdrop to a story involving stylized fights and action, high technology, and exotic locales. Examples include the *James Bond 007* franchise, *Mission: Impossible*, *True Lies,* and the *Bourne* series, as well as the television shows *24, The Avengers* (the 1960s series)*, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D*, and even *Archer* (although *Archer* is every bit as much an action comedy).
- **War**: Conventional or special forces military units engage in realistic, lethal combat. War films generally will span one engagement, with fairly straightforward objectives like the destruction or capture of a target, pursuit or evasion, or the rescue of prisoners of war. Examples include *Enemy at the Gates*, *Band of Brothers*, *Black Hawk Down*, *The Delta Force*, and *First Blood Part II*.

A great many of these genres blur at the edges; a spy action thriller, war/horror, or comedy adventure are not at all unreasonable. The important thing isn't to pick a genre from the list and play firmly within its boundaries, so much as to figure out what style the group wants to play, and to set everyone's expectations accordingly. This discussion sets the tone of the game, and the appropriate level of seriousness or eccentricity the group is looking for – there isn't one "right" approach, but everyone should agree before the game begins. If one player takes a character from *Black Hawk Down* and brings him to *Hot Shots! Part Deux*, the story quickly breaks down – same thing the other way around. It's all about making sure everyone is engaging the same game and the same plot.

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Setting

With a genre in mind, determine the setting of your game. Setting incorporates several of the W-questions – who, what, and when. There are a few things to figure out:

- **When** is the arc taking place? Measure of a Badass assumes a very near future setting (2020-2025); that can be moved forward or back by a couple of decades without too much trouble, but if you go too far into the past or future, you may need to customize the setting, gear, and possibly even Archetypes a bit (see **Going Full Custom** for more details).
- **Who** is the player team working for? Determine their parent or handling organization, whether that's an intelligence agency, military, police or law enforcement group (whether official or secret), a non-governmental organization (NGO), or even themselves. *What strengths does the organization have?* (A big budget, strong intelligence, a powerful network of connections, the ability to work outside the law, secrecy, etc.) *What weaknesses do they suffer from?* (A small budget, a lack of effective contacts, bureaucracy and red tape, etc.) Write those down – the GM can use them to properly tailor mission briefings and gear-up.
- **What** is the story arc's main threat? It could be the work of insane criminal masterminds, like in the James Bond series, or an organized terrorist group like al-Qaeda, for a more realistic bent, or *G.I. Joe*'s Cobra, for something less realistic. It could be an invading army (*Red Dawn*), or monsters (*Pacific Rim*), or aliens (*Independence Day*). It could even be people getting in the way of the group's main goal: if they're adventuring to find historical artifacts to sell, or a group of mercenary assassins, a band of rival thieves or mercenaries, or a standing military or police force (*Indiana Jones*), or even an ancient and fated conspiracy (*Tomb Raider, Noir*) could serve as opposition! This threat will be the main driver of the arc, so choose carefully.

Example

Our group just got together to watch the 2012 film, *The Avengers;* half the group is hooked on *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, and really enjoyed the idea of a global counter-terrorism unit involving esoteric heroes, but want to see how everyday people operate in that environment instead of superheroes. This seems like a perfect fit for *Badass*. The style of the show and film were action thrillers, which gives us a fair bit of latitude for setting and adversary; one player mentions how she'd really enjoyed some of the later *G.I. Joe* works, and brought up Cobra – the idea of a conspiratorial overarching criminal syndicate with their fingers in every pot would serve well as an overarching theme and adversary. The setting is the default near-future.

Our agency is Yggdrasil, an NGO which, through backroom discussion with the powers of the Five Eyes (the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) and selected allies, is charged with performing missions that they can't be formally involved in without causing a political catastrophe. Yggdrasil has the advantage of a substantial budget and access to the latest technology and weapons, but due to the need for distance with national powers, is faced with the double-edged sword of being involved in highly dangerous missions without a substantial amount of support from conventional sources.

Our main adversary will be the Crimson Fist, an international criminal syndicate, whose goal is the accumulation of wealth and power, to the point of potentially taking over governments, and even the world, if left unchecked. Their methods include some legitimate business, but also extortion, espionage, assassination, and outright terror – the ends justify the means. Like Yggdrasil, they have deep pockets and global reach. Instead of the difficulty of support, their weakness is factionalism, since their views may not be shared by everyone in the organization – that said, the main leadership does not take kindly to second-guessing, and playing one faction against another (or the organization as a whole) is certainly possible.

This storyline will serve as the example for the rest of the book; Yggdrasil agents serve as the examples for each player character Archetype (see **Constructing a Badass** and **Archetypes** for more).

Building Standalone Missions

The same process works fine for building single missions; in this case, it may be better for the GM to determine the setting and style alone, since having a planning session for a one- or two-session game is kind of overkill. In this case, just make sure everyone has a chance to communicate via telephone or electronic means to make sure everyone playing has some buy-in into the action that will happen at the table. Communication is key – figuring out the tone of the game ahead of time ensures players show up with characters appropriate to the mission to be played, and that no one on either side of the table has any unpleasant surprises.

Constructing a Badass

Before we begin, let's get one thing straight right now: *action heroes kick ass.* They're uniquely competent individuals, able to tackle just about anything their foes throw at them. While the abilities you select represent your Badass's best capabilities, they don't represent the *only* ones. Don't be afraid to branch out and try just about anything you can think of to get the job done. The game won't stop you – but there are things you will find harder (or easier!) than others.

There are three elements to a Badass: Core Archetype, Stats, and Boosts.

Archetype

Your Badass's Archetype defines the character's schtick, her preferred method of doing business during a mission. Is she a fighter who stands tall in front of the enemy line? Is she someone who slinks in the shadows, waiting for her time to strike? Or does she do her best work interacting with things instead of people, driving the cars, cracking computers, or otherwise?

Further explanation and the mechanics of Archetypes are explained in the **Archetypes** chapter, later. Your Core Archetype will define the primary focus of your Badass; Boosts (and later, Evolutions) allow you to customize that Archetype to your liking. Here's an overview of the Archetypes:

- *The Gunslinger*: an expert in the fine art of close quarters combat with handguns.
- *The Soldier*: a tough-as-nails warrior packing heavy arms and armor.
- *The Eagle Eye*: a master scout with the ability to hit anything, at any range, with any weapon.
- *The Shadow*: a stealthy infiltrator and assassin, skirting the edge of perception.
- *The Wheelman*: a prodigy behind the controls of any vehicle imaginable.
- *The Iron Hand*: a consummate master in the art of unarmed combat.
- *The Weapon Master*: a CQC master, who uses old and new hand weapons to deadly effect against any opponent.
- *The Field Medic*: a medical expert with the ability to treat any condition, buff allies, and afflict enemies with… problems.
- *The Sapper*: an engineer in the business of creating solutions from any physical system.
- *The 1337 h4x0r*: a computer whiz who can crack anything remotely, bringing the enemy's hardware to bear against them.
- *The Smooth Operator*: a psychological con artist, able to use wiles and moves to manipulate a mark into just about anything.
- *The Tactical Commander*: a brilliant tactician, able to lead a team to victory against any odds.

Select your Archetype, and note its Core Abilities. It's usually best if everyone at the table picks a different Archetype.

Stats

Badasses have four stats that apply to any roll undertaken in the course of play. These are the main modifier to any roll you make.

- **Strength** (**ST**) – Physical power and toughness.
- **Speed** (**SP**) – Agility, fine dexterity and motor control.
- **Perception** (**PC**) – Awareness, attention to detail, insight and instinct, and lightning mental reaction.
- **Aptitude** (**AP**) –Willpower, intelligence, and calculated thought.

Stats are measured on a scale from -4 to +4, which correspond to increasing levels of ability. An average human has +0 in every stat.

Score	*Description*
-4	Barely functional (**SP** for a quadriplegic)
-3	Inept (**ST**, **PC**, **AP** for a young child)
-2	Poor
-1	Below average
+0	Average
+1	Above average
+2	Exceptional (**ST** for a designated hitter in pro baseball)
+3	World-class (**ST**/**SP** for an Olympic-level athlete)
+4	Arguably the best in the world (**AP** for Einstein or Hawking)

Assign your stats so that they sum to +4; each stat must be between 0 and +3. Once assigned, your stat scores are fixed. Though abilities and poisons can adjust them up or down temporarily, they do not permanently change unless your character *Evolves* — see **Advancement and Evolution** under **Mission Procedure** for more.

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Boosts

Each Archetype has a list of five *Boosts*. Boosts are special characteristics that can improve your ability with certain actions by providing a die roll bonus or reducing a penalty, or special abilities that you wouldn't normally have access to. The Boosts attached to an Archetype improve actions typically associated with that Archetype – if you want to be a "pure" Tactical Commander, for example, you could just take three Boosts from the Tactical Commander list. You can, however, take Boosts from any list, not just your own Archetype; if you envision your Badass as a "blend" of two or more Archetypes, you can pull that off by picking Boosts from the "secondary" Archetype's list. (If you wanted to play a stealthy Eagle Eye, for one example, you could take a few of the Boosts from the Shadow.) **Select three Boosts from any list or combination of lists. You are not required to take Boosts from your chosen Archetype. You can only have one "copy" of a Boost on your list at any given time** (that is, you can't have the same Boost twice for double effect, although bonuses to the same action from two or more different Boosts do stack).

Description

At this point, we have a character who is capable, and probably proactive, but not necessarily interesting. What distinguishes a generic Soldier from Joseph Ramirez, Yggdrasil Tactical Intervention Specialist, is some depth of character – who is he? What makes him tick? Action heroes may not be the height of drama, but they do generally have some "buy-in" that makes them who they are, and connects them to the setting, the plot offscreen, and the other characters.

Answer each of the following questions on your character sheet:

- **Who are you?** What's your occupation? If you were hired by a parent organization, what did you do before you were recruited? Did you have a choice in the matter?
- **How do you relate to your sponsoring organization?** What do you do, and what title or rank do you hold? What's your current standing and reputation within the organization? Are you loved, hated, tolerated, respected?
- **What's your motivation or outlook?** Any good actor needs to know why their character is in the scene, or in the movie. Why do you do what you're doing? For a paycheck? To serve the people? By way of a code of honor? For revenge? What do you think of what your team is doing?

Wait until everyone has built their characters, and then answer this final question:

- **Pick another character on the team. You have a close connection with them, whether personal or impersonal – what is it?** Were they an old war buddy? Family? A lover? A target? Talk it over and get the other player's okay with whatever you choose before you write it down. (If you want to establish connections with other characters too, by all means do so, but at minimum, figure out one.)

Example Badass

I'm building my character, Joseph Ramirez: he's a former US Army Ranger, who served as an automatic rifleman doing forward reconnaissance. He's now a "consultant" with Yggdrasil. I've picked Soldier for my archetype, a heavy weapons expert. This means he's going to make a lot of noise; I need to be good at shooting, but also have some staying power, since I want the enemy to notice me and recognize me as their greatest threat. (Two of the other players are playing Lynx the Shadow, who's a stealth and assassination specialist, and Aleph-Null the 1337 H4x0r, an info-tech master; they're both powerful individuals, but they're not fond of a stand-up fight. Bishop, the Tactical Commander, will help me out, but I had *better* make a lot of noise, so they can get in and do their jobs unnoticed!)

My core abilities are:

- **Armed to the teeth:** You're always packing heat, carrying heavier weapons and armor than anyone else. You get two extra Gear Points at the start of every mission, but you *must* spend them on either weapons or armor.
- **Pack mule:** You're used to carrying a pack that weighs as much as you do. You ignore the first -1 in gear penalties to your **Speed** from weapons, armor, or other items.
- **Weapon qualification:** You've tried out just about every gun out there. You get a free extra boost from the Soldier list.

I put +1 in **Strength**, since I want to be able to take a punch or three. I could put a +2 there and be even tougher, but I plan to be packing some pretty serious armor when I wade into a firefight, and since by virtue of *Pack mule,* I won't suffer as much of a Load penalty for heavy armor, it's not quite as necessary. I put a 0 in **Speed**; as an Army Ranger, Ramirez needed to be capable of some pretty serious athletics, but he was never the "float like a butterfly" type. (That's what cover is for.) In **Perception** I put +2; my main goal is to shoot, and shoot well. Finally, +1 in **Aptitude**; being the tip of the spear means you've got to be able to navigate, for one. Ramirez's also got some training in demolitions, and he needs some brainpower to back that up.

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For my Boosts, I'll start with my primary role: I get a free Boost from the Soldier list from my Weapon Qualification skill, so I'll take *Machine gunner*, which will help when I use my weapon of choice, a light machine gun. For my standard three, I start with *Grenadier*, since I had to qualify with grenades as well. I can take hits that my allies (or errant civilians) can't, so I'll take *Guardian* to protect them. For my last choice, I'll take *Saboteur* from the Sapper list, representing the training I have in planting and disposing explosives. This also gives me a leg up on possibly evolving into Sapper later, which would direct me toward the role of a combat engineer.

For description: Ramirez was originally an automatic rifleman in the US Army Rangers, a forward recon group. Serving as the support gunner meant he needed to stay aware of the biggest threats on the battlefield, while simultaneously being the same thing himself. After showing his mettle in a special reconnaissance mission that led to the capture of the entire leadership corps of Boko Haram, he was selected by his superior officer – John Bishop of Yggdrasil, it turns out – to serve the world in a greater capacity. He's now a well-respected member of Yggdrasil under the Tactical Intervention group. You don't join the Army Rangers for a paycheck. Ramirez strived from childhood to be a protector of the innocent; in his role, he serves as the tip of the spear in protecting the world from terror threats.

My teammates are Bishop, the Tactical Commander, Aleph-null, the 1337 h4x0r, and Lynx, the Shadow. Talking it over with the group, we decide that Bishop was my superior officer in the Army Rangers, and was actually recruited as a mole by Yggdrasil a few months prior to scout out potential candidates – I was the only one who passed. I write down: "Bishop: old war buddy, Yggdrasil recruiter". As we talk, Aleph's player mentions that Aleph is a little bit paranoid, gathering as much intel as she can about whatever she's getting into – Yggdrasil leverages her skills to make sure they have as complete a picture as they can manage. It makes sense, we decide, that she might've investigated my background using a few connections and database scripts, so I write: "Aleph: investigated my background, access to embarrassing detail". There's a scary amount of detail in databases out there, which require clearances so secret that you have to be cleared to know about the clearances, so there's no telling what data she may or may not have on me. That might be something worth exploring later! Since the team has only just come together, I'm having trouble figuring out a connection with Lynx, but I have two already, so I'll come back to her later.

Establishing Connections in Play

Any good story has a variety of characters – player, allied, enemy, and so on. **When a new, named character appears** (an allied officer or fellow agent, an enemy of Elite or higher class, or an important neutral NPC), **the GM may ask one or more of the players what their connection to this character is**, possibly with a leading question ("Lynx, Sadako tried to kill you a few years back. Why?"). Agree on something and write it down. If you really can't think of anything, that's okay, but try to come up with something (and let the others at the table help you) if you can; that character is important and may come up again, mentioning, reminiscing, or even exploiting your past history! Similarly, **if a character appears that intrigues you, and you'd like to establish a connection to them, bring it up to the GM when they first appear**. Unless there's a good reason why not, the GM will ask you for details, and then file that detail away for later exploration.

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Taking Action (Rolling the Dice)

Sometimes, it's easy to handle an action a player or other character takes; opening a door, reloading a handgun, and so on are simple tasks, not worthy of complication. When a character takes an action, usually the GM will assume success and describe the results. Sometimes, though, it's not quite that simple. When the result is uncertain, we may need to roll dice to determine what happens.

There are four times you will roll dice in *Measure of a Badass*. When a character under your control attempts to:

- Overcome one short-duration obstacle, or one short-duration step in a larger task (for the difference between these two, see **Overcoming an obstacle or task**, below)
- Make one single attack (whether mental or physical) against one or multiple enemies
- Set up a future action for their allies or themselves, creating an advantage to press
- Obtain information they lack, *and* is not plainly obvious through simple observation (sight, sound, etc.)

you'll need to make a roll.

Not all of these situations are interesting or relevant to the action, though. Sometimes, action heroes do mundane things, like driving to the office for a briefing, unlocking a door with a key, cleaning their handgun, and so forth. Rolling dice for these would just add noise; it's distracting, and it doesn't add anything to the fun. So, only roll dice when:

- The outcome is reasonably in doubt
- It matters to the story at hand
- And something meaningful could go wrong if it doesn't go to plan.

All rolls in *Measure of a Badass* are made using **a single ten-sided die ("d10") per character involved**.

Before You Roll

There are a few things to establish before the dice hit the table. It's important to figure out why we're rolling dice and what's going on; if you just "call for a roll", sometimes we'll end up with a numerical result and have no idea how to interpret it.

Always determine, before you roll:

- The acting character's intent
- Whether the action is opposed by circumstances only, or by one or more people on the scene
- What stat each person involved in the roll is using
- The target number of the roll, and/or whether advantage or disadvantage penalties apply

Intent

As the word implies, *intent* is the intended goal of your action. State in simple terms what your desired outcome is: "I knock the blade out of his hand", or "I try to crack the security protocol and find a back door". The intent will determine which of the four action types your goal corresponds to, or if your goal is even in question (If your goal is something like "I reload my gun", or "I spend a few seconds aiming at the commander to line up my shot", it just happens, no roll required – similarly, if it's something completely absurd or patently impossible, like shooting the moon, or convincing an entire safehouse full of gun runners to stand down by shouting angrily at the front door, it doesn't happen, no roll necessary).

If the outcome of your action is in doubt, but the intent *doesn't* fit one of the four action types, usually one of a few things is true:

1) *The action is so small it doesn't really merit rolling for*. In this case, the action is either automatically successful, or just part of a larger action.
    - Some actions that would normally merit rolls in other systems may fit this description – for instance, there is no roll to hear something. The GM plainly states (or determines) what characters see and hear, so no roll is necessary; interpreting or making use of that information is another matter altogether.
2) *The action is too large in scope.* If an action you're trying to perform fits multiple action types, or consists of multiple short-duration tasks or obstacles, break it down into multiple steps. You can't hack a computer and download the NOC list, or explore a cave, or convince a room full of baddies to convert to your side in a single stroke. In this case, figure out the objectives or steps necessary to achieve your goal and write them on an Objective List card (see **Objective Lists**, later, for further explanation). The gist, though, is that once you accomplish each step on the list, your intent happens.
    - Breaking up a long-duration goal into objectives like this also gives multiple characters a chance to help meaningfully, accomplishing tasks instead of just all setting up a primary action.

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Opposed vs. unopposed rolls

Some rolls are opposed by prevailing circumstances – essentially, the innate difficulty of the task itself. Other times, an action may be directed against another character, or another character may have a chance to intervene or directly defend against the action. Actions opposed by circumstances are called *unopposed rolls*; when making an unopposed roll, you'll need to roll a score on your die that beats a static *target number* (see **Target number**, below). Actions opposed or interfered with by one or more characters are called *opposed rolls*; to succeed, you'll need to beat the roll of any defending characters.

The presence of active opposition can cause an action that would normally be an automatic success to require a roll. Simple movement usually doesn't need a roll, but attempting to back away from an enemy in CQC to fire at him, or dashing past a foe blocking a hallway certainly would, since the opposition puts the outcome into question.

Stat

Determine what stat each character involved in a roll is testing. If the task is:

- a test of the character's physical strength, power, or endurance, roll **Strength**.
- a test of the character's quickness, agility, or fine dexterity, roll **Speed**.
- a test of the character's hand-eye coordination, awareness, attention to detail, or insight, roll **Perception**.
- a test of the character's willpower or intelligence, roll **Aptitude**.

If more than one could apply, choose the *best* match for the action being attempted – if two stats could be equally valid, use the stat in which your character has the highest score. (If you're attempting a task in which another stat could assist you, but not necessarily solve the task at hand, you might be able to apply the secondary stat to set up the primary task – see **Setting up an action**, below.) If a task has two or more components, to which different stats could apply, you may have two or more tasks instead of one – break it down into multiple steps, and record each on an Objective List (see **Using Task Objectives** under **Playing the Mission** for more).

Target number

If a roll is unopposed, but the outcome is in question, the actor must roll against a target number. Unlike an opposed roll, unopposed rolls have a static target number determined by circumstances – specifically, who would find the task a good challenge, and thus have about a 50/50 chance of success. Figure out the total modifier of someone who would have that 50/50 chance and add 6. For instance, if a task is a good challenge for someone who is trained or a "natural" at something, but not an expert (a +2 modifier), it would have a Target Number of 8.

Who has a 50/50 shot at success?	*Target number*
Just about anyone (-2)	4*
An average person (+0)	6
Someone trained, or a natural (+2)	8
An expert (+4)	10
Only the best of the best (+6)	12

* It's usually not worth rolling the dice if the target number is this low; the task's outcome isn't really in question.

Advantage and disadvantage

If an unusual circumstance or a condition affecting a character could affect the task's success (for example, being in a dark environment while using **Speed** to hide from sight, or choking back teargas while attempting to shoot a target with **Perception**), apply a modifier for advantage or disadvantage.

- If circumstances make the task markedly easier (foreknowledge, taking extra time to aim a shot, attempting to disarm someone wielding a pistol at range) or give a character an edge over their opposition, the character has *advantage*; add 2 to the roll's result. If the character has a *serious advantage*, something that makes the task almost trivial when it otherwise wouldn't be, add 4.
- If circumstances make the task markedly harder (distracted by noise or teargas, a complete unfamiliarity with a system, aiming a rifle shot while on horseback at full gallop) or give a character's opposition an edge over them, the character has *disadvantage*; subtract 2 from the roll's result. If the character has a *serious disadvantage*, something that makes an easy task very difficult when it otherwise wouldn't be, subtract 4.

If multiple effects grant you advantage or disadvantage on a roll, add it only once. If two effects grant you two different advantage bonuses, the higher one counts. Advantage and disadvantage penalties cancel each other out; if you have effects that grant you advantage and effects that grant you disadvantage, don't modify the roll. Advantage *does* stack with roll bonuses from Boosts or Core Abilities. For example, an Eagle Eye gets +1 to single-shot attacks with a firearm while stationary; if she then takes a turn to aim, granting advantage (+2) on her attack, she gets a total of +3 added to her roll.

Really, advantage and disadvantage make more sense for opposed rolls than they do for unopposed rolls; if a roll is unopposed, you can also adjust the target number in the opposite direction instead (+2 or +4 for disadvantage, -2 or -4 for advantage).

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Making a Roll

Once you've made all the appropriate determinations, it's time to roll the dice. All parties involved roll:

1d10 + **stat** + modifiers

What happens is determined by the difference between the actor's roll and the target number, or the rolls of the opposing characters.

For an unopposed roll, or a roll opposed by a single character:

Roll result	*Effect*
Roll **meets or exceeds** target number or opposing roll	The roll is a **hit**. The actor accomplishes their intent.
Roll **exceeds** target number or opposing roll **by 4 or more**	The roll is a **strong hit**. The actor not only accomplishes their intent, but gets some further benefit, which depends on the action; it might be a bonus to a future roll, the result might be bigger and better than the roll's intent, conservation of some sort of resource, or something else.
Roll **falls short** of target number or opposing roll	The roll is a **miss**. The action runs into a complication.
Roll **falls short** of target number or opposing roll **by 4 or more**	The roll is a **strong miss**. Not only does a complication come true, but something else makes things even worse; it could be a second complication, or one complication that is worse than normal.

For a roll opposed by multiple characters individually:

Roll's result	*Effect*
Roll **meets or exceeds** target number or opposing roll	The roll is a **hit**. The actor accomplishes their intent against this opponent.
Roll **falls short** of target number or opposing roll	The roll is a **miss**. The complication comes true for this opponent.

Rolls opposed by multiple characters *cannot score a strong hit or miss.* They either hit or miss against each opponent.

Automatic hits and misses

There's always a chance a task could succeed, or run into trouble. *For the acting character,* if a 10 comes up on the die before any modifiers are added (a "natural 10"), the worst the actor can do is a hit, regardless of the target number or the defender's roll. It's still a strong hit if it beats the target number by 4 or more. Similarly, if a 1 comes up on the die before any modifiers are added (a "natural 1"), the roll is automatically at best a miss, and it's still a strong miss if it falls short by at least 4.

A defender's roll sets a target to beat, and a natural 1 or 10 has no special effect.

Complications

We've established that the action the acting character is about to undertake has a meaningful risk if it doesn't go to plan. For shorthand, we call these "complications". Sometimes, it'll be obvious: an attack misses, or the soldier fails to detect the tengu sneaking up on him before she opens fire. Other times, it's less clear; while "it doesn't work" is a convenient fallback, if the risk to an action is just having to waste time trying again, it ceases to be a meaningful risk, because the actor can just keep trying until it works (though this is less true when the time taken would give circumstances or opposition an opportunity to react). The term "complication" belies the meaning: they don't have to be simple failure, and often aren't. A task might take more time, require resources that may or may not be at hand, expose the actor to danger, apply a penalty (called "disadvantage") to future rolls, or other problems. The direct consequence of this is, unless the action's failure is (or is part of) the complication chosen for a roll, *the action's (eventual) success is assumed*. Often, a more meaningful complication than "you fail" leads to more interesting problems for the team to deal with!

The GM chooses one or more potential complications for an action being rolled. He can choose these before or after the roll; choosing before lets the player know where they stand before the dice come out, but choosing them after often allows the game to flow better, since you don't have to make a lot of choices that ultimately don't happen. The GM may choose one complication, or choose several and let a player involved pick (whether the complication is happening for them, or for an opponent whose roll missed). Players are welcome to suggest potential complications for an action, but the GM gets final say. The complication chosen happens when the die roll is missed, and if it's a strong miss, it's either worse, or a second one happens. Players, if you're not sure about the risk you're taking, you can ask the GM to choose the potential complication before you roll if you think it might make a difference.

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Types of Actions, Complications, and Bonuses

When you make a roll, some action a character takes prompts it; after the roll's result is determined, the description of the roll's effect feeds back into the action in play, changing things up in some way. It's a cycle; scenario prompts action, action prompts mechanics, mechanics change scenario. We've established the four types of actions; now, let's examine each one in detail, as well as the potential complications, results, and bonuses that can result from a roll, and how they might change the situation at hand.

Overcome an obstacle or task

When you attempt to complete a short-duration obstacle, or a short-duration component of a more complicated task, this is the action to use. "Short-duration" means something whose results are immediate, for which only one stat applies, and whose execution takes a short time, anywhere from a few seconds (or one conflict turn) to a few minutes. Look at this as a good fallback – if an action doesn't qualify as observation, an attack, or a setup, this is the one to use. If it doesn't apply (the intent is the wrong scope, or otherwise), you may need to re-examine whether you really need to be rolling dice. If you find yourself in a case where a stat could help with an objective, but couldn't directly solve the problem itself, you're probably trying to set up an action instead, or you may have multiple tasks or obstacles to overcome.

When attempting to overcome an obstacle or task, specify what you're trying to achieve; *on a hit, you accomplish your goal*: you sever the timer on the bomb, you climb the wall, you make the jump in your car, you activate the firewall, etc.

Potential complications when attempting to overcome an obstacle or task are:

- What you're doing will take more time (if you're in a conflict, you may have to try again on the next turn; in a long-duration action, it might take several more seconds, minutes, hours)
- It'll take more resources, like time, fuel, or ammo; you might run low or out of something
- You need something that you don't have to accomplish your goal – you can't try again until you find what you're missing
- You get hurt doing it (suffering an injury at an appropriate Power rating – see **Health and Injury**)
- You attract unwanted attention, giving an enemy that arrives on the scene a chance to detect you
- It's hasty, unreliable work; you may suffer disadvantage penalties when acting on the results, or it may break or fall apart

If you score a strong hit, you might gain one of these benefits:

- You accomplish your task much more quickly than expected
- You use fewer (or no) resources
- The work you do is superb, giving you an additional benefit, doing something extra, or giving you advantage forward to a future roll. Define what was so good about the result; you get advantage as long as that result is relevant (a few rolls at most)

Set up an action

Occasionally, you'll want to make an attempt to set up a future action, either for yourself or for an ally. *Set up an action* represents both simple assistance – passing someone tools, spotting as a forward observer for a mortar or air strike – and setting up your own later action, performing reconnaissance, distraction, or other techniques – planning an entry route before making a stealthy dash through occupied territory, or setting off a diversion.

When attempting to set up an action, specify what you're doing, what action you're trying to support, and how what you're doing will help; *on a hit, you (or an ally) get advantage (+2) on a future action that the setup will help*.

Potential complications when setting up an action include:

- You expose (or produce!) an unexpected complication, so you get a penalty to one future action that the complication hurts, instead of the bonus
- The approach you were setting up for the task won't work, and you'll have to try a different method
- If you're setting up another person's action, you expose yourself to danger, or the risks their action poses

On a strong hit, you might gain one of these benefits:

- You get a serious advantage (+4) instead
    - If the setup is perfect, the future action might be an automatic success instead
- You get a lasting advantage that carries forward to other rolls, as long as the setup is relevant

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Make an attack

An attack is a single attempt to either directly incapacitate a target with a weapon (or your bare hands), or to accomplish some other objective using violence (whether physical or mental) as a tool. Anything intended to directly interdict or hurt another character or object is an attack. Physical attacks are pretty obvious; shooting someone, disarming them, knocking them down, pushing them back, throwing harrying punches to disorient them, and so forth. Mental attacks might include intimidation, diversion, feints, and so on.

A single attack has an obvious intent, with a reasonable scope. Although you might intend to kill someone when you shoot them, an attack with a goal of "on a hit, I kill him" is reaching; shooting someone will hurt them, for sure, but whether it kills them isn't something in your direct control (see **Health, Conditions, and Injury**, later). Similarly, you can certainly intimidate someone (or a room full of people, under the right circumstances) into surrendering, staying down, or otherwise getting out of the way for a while with the appropriate shout; convincing them to join you as an ally, commit suicide, or something else way off the wall is just not something you can do in a single stroke (and may well be impossible), unless the target is predisposed to an action like that.

When making an attack, specify your target, weapon (if any), and the intended results of your attack; *on a hit, you hit your target* with the appropriate results. In general, *on a miss, the attack misses, is dodged, blocked, resisted, or is otherwise ineffective*. The GM (or players defending against an attack) might agree on a different complication instead, and the list below is definitely in play on a strong miss.

Aside from an attack missing, being deflected or absorbed, or failing outright, other potential complications are:

- The enemy gets to cover or a better position
- The attack is less effective, dealing reduced damage (half damage, or disadvantage to one roll instead of disorientation; only choose this if the target has no feasible way of getting out of the attack's area of effect)
- You overextend or unbalance yourself, or put yourself into a poor position, giving you disadvantage to one future roll if the poor positioning makes a difference
- You are caught in the attack and take an injury at the same power – usually, this only makes sense for area attacks where the attacker is close to the blast zone
- An ally is caught in the attack and takes an injury at the same power (only pick this if the person controlling the ally agrees; otherwise, pick something else. Often, friendly fire is lame.)
- The enemy has a free opportunity to counter-attack
- You use up your resources – your magazine runs dry, requiring you to reload, or for a weapon with the Limited tag, you might be out entirely

On a strong hit, you might gain one of these benefits:

- You set up allies' follow-up attacks, granting advantage to those attacks as long as the setup makes sense and stays relevant (usually one roll, sometimes a few)
- Your attack hits harder, increasing the effect of a successful hit (+50% damage, stun for two turns instead of one, serious disadvantage (-4), increasing the level of control exerted by a mental attack, etc.)
- You have the opportunity for an immediate follow-up attack (with the same or a different intent, against this or another target, however is practical)
- A free secondary effect occurs with your attack (disarm, knockdown, stagger)

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Obtain information

The GM serves as the cameraman; in that role, it's his job to serve as the players' eyes, ears, and other senses. **Perception** rolls to just spot something are therefore not especially meaningful. Instead, **Perception** and **Aptitude** (when not used for directly solving obstacles or making attacks) can serve as a representation of a character's ability to closely study people, places, and things (or get a "gut feeling" about something), and connect the dots with the obvious things they see, hear, and know to reason out the bigger picture.

Obtain information also serves as a representation of a character's wealth of knowledge and experience, including things that the player herself may not know. It's not exactly roleplaying if we expect the person playing the bomb disposal expert to know the particular differences between C4 and Semtex, or expect the meek, friendly person playing the charismatic, intimidating tough guy to be able to know what particular influence to press on a suspect in order to get them to confess.

When rolling to *obtain information*, ask a specific question; on a hit, you notice, learn, or recall some kind of fine detail that connects the dots about a question; what's about to happen, who's in control, the presence of something that isn't as it appears, and so on.

Potential complications when obtaining information include:

- You might miss something important; you can still see what's obvious, but figuring out what you're missing is up to you
- You need more intel to obtain the relevant information; some kind of identifying characteristic, clue, etc.
- You attract attention; someone might use the intervening time to find something out about you, or to act against you

If you score a strong hit, you might gain one of these benefits:

- You get advantage (+2) forward to acting on the information you obtained
- You discover an even greater, more important piece of information, or it connects the dots of another, related question

What about spotting hidden objects or enemies?

As GM, you may think this turns the conventional "roll to spot this hidden object" or "roll to hear the enemies sneaking up on you" rolls on their heads, and you'd be right. In general, rolls like that can be boring, counter-productive, and, where applied without caution, unfair. "Hear the enemy before they sneak attack you" is kind of a lame roll to call for, because the player had no chance to outwit the opponent. "Spot the hidden item you need to proceed" is also seldom useful, because when the roll is missed, action comes to a halt.

So what can we do instead? Picture a scenario where an enemy is sneaking up on a player. It's your job to honestly describe what they see and hear – tip your hand before you follow through. "Ramirez, you hear footsteps; they're quiet, you're not sure where they are." At this point, it's up to the player to investigate; they might make a **Perception** roll to obtain information, or they might just act on a hunch! If their roll misses, or they choose not to respond, then you've got carte blanche to have the sneak make their attack from the shadows, probably with advantage (+2) for the trouble!

GM Tips

This may seem a little bit confusing at first, but once you've done it a few times, it gets a lot easier. I highly recommend keeping the list of complications and benefits in front of you – there's a short version in the **GM Quick Reference** section at the back of the book. When picking a complication or benefit, never speak its name directly: "You missed, so your action will take extra resources" doesn't really make sense lacking context. Narration of the outcome of a roll begins and ends with the action in play: "You lay the pedal down, making up precious time; the Fist arrived at the governor's mansion a ways ahead of you, and every second counts. That's when you notice your fuel gauge ticking dangerously close to E…" If you pick something from the list and can't think of a reasonable justification for how it occurs in the story, pick something else instead.

You might also find yourself in a position where a character has an immediate counter to a complication generated by a missed roll. ("The exhaust starts spewing thick, oily smoke; you can't see through it, and you have no idea where your targets are." "That's okay! I put on my thermal goggles!") If something like that happens, just let it. The rules don't specify that something bad has to happen that the player can't counter, only that a complication occurs. A negative result that sparks player creativity and spurs them to action is better than one that just causes problems for a player as a penalty.

Also, don't forget that you don't necessarily have to choose benefits or complications on the list. If something else (with a similar scope) makes sense, go with it, keeping in mind that a good complication is something that allows the team to "fail forward". Have the players take a more arduous path to get where they're going, or introduce a threat they weren't expecting or prepared for, or take away resources. Anything other than "Nope, that didn't work! What do you do now?"

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Example of Play

Here's a short sample of a minute or two of play in Measure of a Badass. I'll be introducing a few concepts here that will be explained later in the manual; if you're curious, feel free to refer to those sections, but we'll focus on illustrating how each of the action types works in practice, from both the players' and GM's perspective.

Raven, Jenna, and Leon are pinned down by a heavy combat drone in the Crimson Fist base's Proving Grounds. It's a tracked, armored behemoth, the size of an APC, packing Gatling lasers, thermal vision, the whole nine yards. They're trying to figure out a way to stop it, fast, before it closes and guns them all down. Meanwhile, Aleph-Null, hidden in the Fist control room, pores over schematics for design after design. She's looking for a weak point, some way to cripple the machine. We're in a conflict, which means that action happens on a turn-by-turn basis, one side after the other, everyone on a side making one significant action per turn (see **Conflicts**, later, for how that works). Right now, it's the enemy's turn.

The bot is the only enemy on the battlefield. The GM describes its action – it's *making an attack*. "The drone rolls slowly forward, Gatling laser spraying back and forth; it's trying to suppress you while it overruns your position. That's its **Perception** vs. your **Speed**, if you want to get out of the line of fire." (See **Attacks and defenses examples** under **Combat** for more on what stats are relevant to each kind of attack.) The GM rolls the drone's attack; its **Perception** is +2, and the GM rolls a 3, for a total of 5. Leon and Jenna roll their **Speed**, and get an 8 and 9 respectively. Raven isn't so lucky; the dice fail her, and a 4 comes up, for a 5 – since the actor wins ties, the drone hits. (Since the roll against Jenna missed by 4, the attack would have been a strong miss if she was the only target, but remember that multiply-opposed rolls can't score strong hits or misses.) "Leon and Jenna dash in opposite directions to cover nearby; Raven, you don't have time to move before a hail of laser fire flies at you, and you're stuck behind the crates." "Damn!" Raven shouts. "Aleph, we're running out of time, here!"

Now it's the Badasses' turn.

The GM says to Aleph's player, "Okay, you've got a decent view of the battle from overhead – not great, though. The Fist cameras aren't much to speak of – 720p, not even legitimate HD, and pretty mediocre digital zoom." "Naturally," she replies. "But I mean, it's a tracked APC-looking thing, right? How many could there be? I try to find it in the archives, figure out what its weakness is." That's a roll to *obtain information*; Aleph already stated the intent, and the GM figures that locating the drone by a physical description is a test of **Perception**. The Fist's archives aren't exactly small, and she's in a hurry – but even so, Aleph, being a 1337 h4x0r, has the ability *RTFM*, which gives her the ability to quickly understand and work with any computer system (see **T3h 1337 h4x0r** under **Archetypes** for more), so the GM picks a Target Number of 7. She rolls: 5, plus 1 for her **Perception**, for 6, just short. The GM chooses *you need more intel* from the list of complications, and describes: "Apparently the Fist are using this document as a clearinghouse for all kinds of designs, and they're not well-organized. And of course, there are several models of this machine, which have strengths, weaknesses, and specs all over the board. You'll need some kind of identifying mark to tell them apart." "Crap," replies Aleph's player. "Okay, Raven, can you give that thing a once-over? Any specific identifying marks on it?"

"Sure, let me get right on that!" Raven replies, currently hunkered behind a few overturned crates, laser blasts flying overhead. "Yeah," the GM explains, "that's going to be a feat, considering the machine has you well pinned." The bot succeeded at a suppressive fire attack the previous turn, and if she leans out, she's getting hit. Raven's player looks at her character sheet, thinking about what she can do – "Wait, I have that fiberscope still! I'll lean up against the crates, use the fiberscope to peer around the corner, see what I can see." Fiberscope cameras aren't much better than the security cams above, but Raven is an Eagle Eye; *All-seeing eye* gives her more information on a successful scouting-related roll, and an additional +2. (see **The Eagle Eye** under **Archetypes**) Trying to *obtain information* again, Raven has a Perception of +3, +1 from the *Scout* Boost, and +2 from *All-seeing eye*; she would be rolling at +6, but the GM reminds her of the circumstances: "With the low resolution on the fiberscope, and all the beams pouring around you, it's going to be tough to get much here, so you're looking at disadvantage (-2) to the roll, and it's **Perception** vs. 9, since you really aren't sure what it is that Aleph needs." "Ugh. Okay…" Skeptical, she rolls, but she's luckier this time; she rolls 6, +6, -2 from the disadvantage, for a total of 10. The GM describes: "You scan as best you can, and notice that the sensing system is mounted on top; three lenses, one bigger than the other two. The big lens is on the left, and it's red-tinted." "Get all that?" Raven says, as though she was repeating the information the GM just provided. The GM continues – "Aleph, using that information, you figure out that's a GOLIATH-4, and that sensor system is the best way to deal with it – there's a lot of sensitive hardware up there, and the top armor is pretty thin. A sharp blow, or a high enough caliber blast, will take out the thing's primary sensors." Aleph doesn't need to roll again – the complication from her earlier miss was that she needed more information, and she has it now. Since her action's eventual success wasn't challenged by the complication from the miss, she gets the job done without further incident.

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"Sweet," Leon's player says. Leon's a Sapper, and has some interesting ideas for those sensors. "The explosive canister I rigged from that fire extinguisher ought to do the job." "Sure," the GM replies, "but trying to climb on top of that thing to plant it is tantamount to suicide unless you nail the roll, which will *not* be easy." "Wait," Jenna, the Smooth Operator, responds, "let me help you with that. Remember that pillar the thing slammed into a couple turns back? I pull my handgun with my off hand, and dash to the pillar on the opposite side, firing it and the shotgun I had out as I go." "You sure? You don't have *Akimbo* and you're not a Gunslinger, so the handgun won't help, and you're not strong enough to one-hand the shotgun and hit with any degree of accuracy." "I'm not worried about accuracy," Jenna responds; "I just want to make a big enough noise to draw its fire, while Leon sneaks over to the weakened pillar to plant the charge – knock the thing down on top of him!" Leon's player can't contain his excitement; "I like that plan! Let's do that plan!"

"Okay!" Jenna is *setting up an action* – she wants to buy Leon a bonus on his stealth roll. Jenna's got a lot of bonuses to interpersonal actions; her *Crazy eyes* Boost is for intimidation, and while it's hard to intimidate a drone, presenting yourself as a threat is intimidation in a manner of speaking, and since she's a Smooth Operator, she's packing the ability *The Look* (see **The Smooth Operator** under **Archetypes**), which is tailor-made for stuff like this, letting her plant suggestions in a character for a turn, generally by way of simple action. (While a drone obviously doesn't have psychology, at least in a conventional sense, GMs are encouraged to read the descriptions of the characters' abilities broadly – don't just say "no" without a good reason.) She's got **Aptitude** +2, plus 1 from *Crazy eyes*, and the roll is **Aptitude** vs. **Perception**; Jenna rolls a 9, for a total of 12; the drone has **Perception** +2, but its roll isn't much better than that suppression attack last turn, coming up 4, for a 6 total, a strong hit for Jenna. The GM looks over the list of benefits from a strong hit, and while he could choose to give Leon serious advantage (+4) instead of advantage (+2), this is a perfect setup; given that Jenna's on the opposite side of the room, *and* using The Look to get the drone to focus totally on her for a turn, the outcome of Leon's stealth attempt isn't really in question anymore, so an automatic success is perfectly reasonable. "Leon, I'm not even going to make you roll that stealth attempt; Jenna's hail of fire makes plenty of noise, and the bot turns its laser to chase her down." "Nice, I like it!" Leon says.

Raven's player jumps in: "Okay, so if the thing has changed its target, does that mean I'm not being suppressed anymore?" "Well, in a manner of speaking," the GM responds, "but remember that you're all acting at the same time, so even if Jenna acted before you this turn, you'd still have been suppressed for your action." (See **Passage of Time and Simultaneity**, under **Combat**, for more – this is a combat conflict, and even though by necessity we're playing out each character's actions in turn, they're all happening more or less at once.) "You'll have plenty of options next turn, though!" "That'll work," she replies.

"So, I'm clear to just rush over and plant this charge?" Leon's player asks. Leon's a Sapper, and in an earlier scene he put together a bizarre improvised explosive from a fire extinguisher, a spare shotgun round, and some heavy duty double-sided tape to make it sticky. (See **The Sapper** under **Archetypes** for how Leon put this device together using *Improvised construction*.) "Yeah, go ahead!" the GM replies. "Setting it to do what it needs to do quickly isn't all that difficult, especially since you prepared the bomb earlier, so we'll call it **Aptitude** vs. 7." Leon's *overcoming an obstacle or task*, in this case planting that bomb. He winds up and rolls, but his die comes up a 3, which doesn't do the job, even with his **Aptitude** of +2. The GM reviews the list of complications and chooses to make the task take more time, specifically another turn. "You set the charge and hit the detonator you wired – and nothing happens. The shell misfired, and you'll need to swap it out, or make it fire a different way, to set off the bomb. "Dammit," Leon curses. "Jenna, hold his attention for a few more seconds, will you?"

Jenna calls back, between laser bursts, "Oh, sure, no problem, not like I'm in a warzone or anything!"

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Health, Conditions, and Injury

Characters in Measure of a Badass have three characteristics that represent their current physical state: Conditions, Damage, and Health Points.

Conditions

A *condition* is a change in the physical state of a character – specifically, something abnormal. These are usually problems, but occasionally, a condition can have positive effects. Negative conditions can include injuries, temporary blindness or deafness, as well as the effects of toxins or other distracting issues; positive ones generally reflect the effects of beneficial infusions from a Field Medic or other "buffs".

Conditions can affect actions and rolls in two ways; first, a condition might impose disadvantage (or advantage, in the case of a positive condition) on a roll you make that the condition can affect. For example, if you're suffering from the distracting effects of *teargas*, you might suffer disadvantage (-2) on a roll that requires you to concentrate or have clear vision; most combat rolls, and a lot of mental tasks, fall under this banner. Similarly, if you're injured by a *fractured leg*, you might suffer disadvantage (-2) to physical tasks that require you to move. Being *captivated by the Daimyo* might impose disadvantage (-2) to rolls to act against her interests.

Second, a condition may determine whether you can manage a particular task at all; with the same *fractured leg*, you pretty much aren't going to have a chance at sprinting, for example. Being *blind* pretty much prevents you from making an effective ranged attack, or being able to observe enemy movements.

Conditions from transient physical effects, like teargas or some poisons, may naturally wear off after a few turns or a scene; injuries, however, need to be treated before the condition abates. Injuries come as a result of lost Health points.

Health, Power, and Damage

A character's health status represents his current state of physical injury and stamina. Each character begins with a number of *Health points.* Losing one represents a legitimate injury – physical trauma, wounds, broken bones, blood loss, et cetera. *Player characters have two.*

Power is a measure of how hard a blow hits, and how likely it is to cause injury. (It's a measure of injury *potential*, not resulting injury.) When a character suffers some kind of physical injury (either by being successfully attacked, missing a roll, or for some other reason), the character suffers *Damage*. Attacks and other damage sources have values for *Power* which depends on the potential lethality (or knockout potential) of the strike. The total damage inflicted depends on the source of the damage:

If the damage came from an attack: *Base Power* + ***stat*** *used to make the attack*
Otherwise: *Base Power* (flat, with no modifier)

*Potential injury to a normal, unarmored person**	*Damage / base Power*
Incidental damage; might get infected	0
Minor wounds that have the potential for serious injury	2
Moderate trauma or fractures, potentially lethal	4
Serious trauma, broken bones; often lethal	6
Would usually kill a normal person	8
Almost always lethal; potential dismemberment	10
Bodily destructive	12+

* Badasses (and enemies of Elite or higher class) are not normal people. They'll often shrug off punishment from a blow that would kill or incapacitate your average civilian or Mook, via defenses like multiple Health Points, a higher Resistance total, and in the case of player characters, Badass Points.

Example: Lynx makes a pretty serious misstep on a jump and suffers a two-story fall. That's going to deal a world of hurt to most people, but isn't always lethal, so the GM calls it 8 damage. It wasn't an attack from a person, though, so nothing gets added to that.

A character has a Resistance score equal to **8 + 3x their Strength score** (so a character with **Strength** +0 has Resistance 8, **Strength** +1 has Resistance 11, **Strength** +2 is 14, and so on). When a character suffers a strike, whether from an attack or some other effect (see **Combat**, below), he suffers damage equal to **the attack's damage total, minus his Armor Rating**. If the damage they suffer is less than their Resistance score, the blow was a flesh wound, a near miss, or that the target was otherwise able to shrug off the effect. Accumulated damage represents increasing fatigue, slowing the character down and making him more susceptible to serious injury. Damage stays with a character until treated with first aid (see **First aid**, below).

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If the character accumulates damage equal to or greater than his Resistance score, he loses one Health point, representing a physical wound or trauma appropriate to the triggering attack. The GM and the person controlling the injured character decide together on the type of injury suffered, which will depend on circumstances and the attack that caused the injury. The character's owner generally has final say, as long as the injury is plausible – avoid injuries that don't disadvantage a character in any way, but also avoid injuries that are permanently marring or otherwise career-ending. *Record the injury as a condition against the character.* If the character has any Health remaining, his total Damage is reset to zero. Otherwise, he is incapacitated. An incapacitated character may or may not still be conscious, but cannot do anything without help (except maybe crawl and speak weakly).

Examples

Ramirez is blazing away with his machine gun when an enemy from his flank returns fire and connects with a solid assault rifle hit. The enemy has **Perception** +1, and with the assault rifle's Power of 7, it's a total of 8 damage. Ramirez is wearing heavy armor (Armor Rating 3), so he suffers 5 damage, 8 minus the 3 from armor. He has Strength +1, so his Resistance is +11, meaning he's not injured – for now. He marks down the 5 damage, and turns to suppress the squad that thought they could blindside him.

Tenmei is engaged toe-to-toe with a hulking brute packing a wicked sledgehammer. The battle is furious, and Tenmei has taken 6 points of damage already. He tries to duck a blow but is a split-second too late; the enemy has Strength +3, and with the hammer's Power of 8, Tenmei suffers a brutal 11 damage! Tenmei has **Strength** +2, for Resistance 14, and he's wearing medium armor (Armor Rating 2); alas, the 6 damage he's already suffered, plus the 9 damage he just took (11 minus his Armor Rating of 2) equals 15, just higher than his Resistance. The blow rings true, slamming into his side and sending him sprawling several feet away. He crosses off a Health point, and erases his damage. That hefty blow is going to do some lasting harm; his player describes the *cracked rib* he suffers from the blow (the GM nodding in approval, and his player writes the condition on his character sheet), and how the pain stings as he coils and kicks up. Tenmei tastes vengeance; now, this goon is going down. He tightens his grip on his nodachi and charges.

Incidental injury

Any attack whose potential wound is inconsequential enough that it couldn't possibly cause serious complications (a cat scratch, minor burn, or getting plunked by an icy snowball) does not deal damage.

First aid

Treatment with first aid can do two things. First, if a character has accumulated damage, first aid can clear it. Second, if the character has suffered an injury and has a condition lingering from it, they can improve it, turning it into something less hampering via basic treatment. Missing a first aid roll has the same ramifications as a typical miss — either success at a greater cost (valuable resources, time, or similar), or worse, the character has an injury that the person treating her doesn't have the ability or tools to fix; they must find them before the character's wounds can be treated. This can be dangerous indeed if the injured character is incapacitated!

Treating Damage with first aid

Incidental wounds can easily be treated with first aid. Given a couple turns and some basic medical gear, a **Perception** or **Aptitude** roll will clear that damage, allowing the character to resist future injury unimpeded. Any conditions received from injuries remain.

Improving injury conditions with first aid

Conditions from injuries stick around until the injury is treated. An injury condition can be removed permanently, and a Health Point restored in the process, either by a Field Medic succeeding at field surgery or by natural recovery at the end of a mission (see below). Otherwise, the condition stays – but it can be improved with a successful attempt at first aid to make it stable and less problematic. As an example, consider John McClane in the original *Die Hard*; after Hans Gruber and his allies shoot out the glass and force McClane to run through it without shoes, he suffers from *bleeding feet* which hamper his ability to walk or run. Obviously, since he's alone, he has no opportunity to visit someone to perform field surgery, but he is able to find a first-aid kit in a bathroom, pull the glass out, and staunch the bleeding, leaving him with *bandaged, painful feet*. They'll still hamper him if he exerts them, but not like they were before.

If a character is incapacitated (has no Health Points), treating an injury condition with first aid will restore one, and return the character to action. The condition is not removed, though, and the character will still be hampered by all of their accumulated injuries until they are properly recovered.

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Natural recovery

At the close of a scene, as long as the player characters have a few moments to catch their breath, *they erase their accumulated damage,* as the bruises and scrapes fade and heal in the intervening time until the next scene.

At the end of a mission, characters recover their Health fully, and all conditions produced by injuries are erased, as they have time to recover and get treatment for their injuries.

Importance and Health Points

People and objects other than the players essentially get Health points proportional to their importance in the story and action in play. Throwaway or unimportant characters, like Mooks, generic soldier allies, and civilians, get one Health point. Important characters, Elite foes and henchmen, and important player allies, get two, or occasionally three. Main antagonists ("Bosses") and other important characters that show up as individuals get four, or occasionally more. Enemies' Health is discussed in greater detail in **Designing and Using Enemies**, later.

Incapacitation and Death (or lack thereof)

Consider your typical larger-than-life heroic action story; it's designed to focus on the adventures and triumphs of the heroes. Incidental, meaningless character death is a stupid way to end the story. Enemies just *don't* kill off the player characters casually. *In Measure of a Badass, the player characters never die permanently* (with one exception: see **Sacrifice**, below), *but this doesn't mean they never lose!* Being incapacitated leads to deeper trouble. If a player is incapacitated and left behind, the enemies capture him; the player party will have to rescue him in the final scene. (A character that is incapacitated and then revived to consciousness in this way usually has one Health point and no Damage, unless the enemy took the time to set and heal her wounds for some reason.)

It's important for the GM to understand that if the players know they aren't going to die (whether the *characters* do or not), *player character death isn't an effective stake in a conflict*. Something else needs to be at risk. If the characters are delayed, the zombie invasion will envelop the town, or the president will be assassinated, or what have you. Yes, this may require effort from the GM and players to come up with something believable, but handled well, what comes out is virtually guaranteed to be interesting. The players' allies have no such protection, and can be killed.

Wiping Out

If the entire player team is incapacitated, one of two things happens, appropriate to circumstances:

- The mission's stakes are raised; the villain's plans advance, and the scenario is one step closer to disaster.
- The mission is a failure, with appropriate ramifications.

In either case, the party finds themselves hospitalized, captured, indebted, or just generally in a bad spot. For example:

- Instead of casually executing the unconscious heroes, they're dragged to the mastermind's evil lair and imprisoned. (How are you going to get out of this one, Mr. Bond?)
- The weird, bio-engineered zombie creature leaves them for dead, and they find themselves in the tent of a medic, who demands repayment from them – even better, the medic demands the player characters perform a time-consuming task while critical time ticks away.
- The facility at the bottom of the ocean is destroyed from orbit before the player team can escape. They awaken, washed on top of a large table, badly injured, and needing to find a way out or signal for help amidst the broken, devastated ruins.

These circumstances mark the start of either the next scene or the next mission. If captured, the team may (or may not!) be missing their gear, and may or may not be able to recover it. Finally, depending on whether the characters are still injured or not, they may start with one or both Health points, and their injury conditions lifted.

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Heroic Sacrifice

Sometimes, action heroes give their last to allow their allies the ability to escape, or complete their mission. If you want to model this twist of fate in your game, apply the following rule. This is very much an optional rule. Some groups won't want to include it, and that's fine; it won't affect the mechanics of the rest of the game at all. If you are interested, though, read on.

Sacrifice Rule

At any time, even if a character is incapacitated, the player controlling the character (and *only* that player – not the GM or anyone else) may, at any point before the scene ends, declare that his character is performing a Heroic Sacrifice for the player party. This is the ultimate Badass move: normal gameplay ceases, and the sacrificing player simply narrates how he resolves the situation for the rest of the team, allowing them to escape, fight on, get home, or whatever the goal for the current scene is. The team uses up no further resources, takes no further damage, and concludes the scene in exactly the condition they currently stand. The player must, at the conclusion of his narration, declare how his character is killed, or otherwise succumbs to his wounds. (The GM may offer adjustments to better model the antagonist's motivations or the conflict at hand, but by no means is he to take control – this is the character's final moment to shine, and as ever, the player has final say regarding the physical state of his character.) A sacrificed Badass is *dead*, and is permanently retired from play. ***This conscious player choice is the only way a Badass can die permanently.***

Vehicle Health

A vehicle has as many Health points as its most important occupant. A player vehicle has two; vehicles driven by Mooks have one, etc. A vehicle that loses its last Health point is rendered inoperable, and may crash if in motion; the driver may generally attempt a **Speed** roll to stop the vehicle safely (or in the case of an aircraft, make a hard landing); failure will automatically inflict damage on everyone inside dependent on the vehicle and its speed. Serious structural damage thereafter will cause the vehicle to ignite and possibly explode, generally causing everyone inside to automatically lose one Health point. Vehicles with an open design, like cars, motorcycles, or buggies, may present the occupants an opportunity to make a **Speed** roll to avoid the injury from the vehicle's explosion as they dive out in the nick of time.

Object and vehicle Resistance

When hit by an attack or other significant blow, most small objects are destroyed. If an object is big enough, or it matters, the GM will set a value for the object's *Armor Rating.* Objects have no **Strength** score, so their Resistance bonus is a flat 8. Bigger units have higher Resistance scores; a car, or something similarly big, has Resistance 10, while a giant thing like a tank has Resistance 12.

Vehicle damage and conditions

If a vehicle loses a Health point but isn't rendered inoperable, some system on the vehicle is damaged – this is a condition against the vehicle, in much the same way as injuries are to characters. For example, a tank that loses a Health point might have *damaged tread*, a car might have a *blown tire*, a speedboat might be *leaking water,* or an attack helicopter may have an *inoperable autocannon*. The important thing is something substantively changes about the vehicle, in more than a descriptive sense. Repairing this damaged system (definitely a multi-step task, and a feat which is usually impossible during combat or while the vehicle is in motion) will restore the lost Health point to the vehicle.

Armor Rating and Power for vehicles armor and weapons

A wide array of weapons and other arms for use against vehicles appears in the **Mounted Weapons** and **Vehicles** sections of **Gearing Up**, later. Establishing Power for weapons and attacks designed to deal with inanimate objects is tricky, since we don't have a good gauge of what constitutes "injury" for a vehicle like we do for people, so instead, anti-vehicle weapons are often classified by what kind of vehicle they're intended to destroy, and therefore the level of armor they're designed to penetrate.

Armor	*Armor Rating*	*Penetrated by*
Minimal; thin rolled-steel body for cars and motorcycles	3	Incidental impacts
Light; aluminum armor for aircraft, light trucks	4	Pistol rounds
Medium; light armored military vehicles, heavily-armored aircraft	5	Rifle and shotgun rounds
Heavy; light or last-gen tanks, modern armored fighting vehicles	6	Anti-materiel rounds and grenades
Very heavy; modern main battle tanks	7	Cannon rounds

A good guideline for establishing the power of a vehicle weapon is to determine the Armor Rating it's designed to penetrate, and adding 2 to 4; that's enough to deal serious damage or kill the weapon's target.

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Conflicts

Obviously, not all action is one-sided. Fights, chases, pursuits, hacking, even interrogations – these are the meaty parts of a great action story, and they all involve a conflict between at least two people or groups. Someone wins and someone loses.

What is a Conflict?

Play in *Measure of a Badass* has two modes. The default play mode is a free-flowing conversation wherein characters take actions at any time, potentially undertake task rolls, and progress the story. The second happens when a conflict starts. The word "conflict", here, presupposes three things:

- Two or more characters or sides have a vested interest in a goal (whether the goal is the same or different for each party)
- Not all sides can get what they want – each wants the same thing for themselves, or the goals are mutually exclusive
- Each side is aware of, and actively competing with, the others

These are all equally important. Simply picking a lock isn't a conflict, since there's only one side. Racing at high speed to reach a hospital before the diplomat bleeds out isn't a conflict – same thing. Two people shooting free throws on a basketball court at the same time isn't a conflict, since there's no competition. Even casually sniping an unaware enemy commander isn't a conflict (though odds are good it'll start one!), since one side is completely unaware. With no competition and direct opposition, there's no conflict.

Each of these tasks could be part of a conflict, though – if the lockpicker is trying to break open a door with security bearing down on her, or the car is being tailed by a pursuing car (or helicopter, or motorcycle…), or the two basketball players are seeing who can shoot the most free throws in sixty seconds, or sniper is involved in an active, pitched battle with the enemy commander (and likely his forces).

Starting a Conflict

Once circumstances set two or more sides against each other – or direct action by one side or another makes circumstances that way – the conflict starts. Play in a conflict becomes turn-based – each character on a side, one side after the other in priority order (see below), takes a single logical action. The turn order repeats, side following side, until the conflict ends.

Turn Order

Before anyone can take turns, we need to establish who goes when.

First, divide the characters in the conflict into their appropriate sides. Usually this will be two obvious sides (players and their allies vs. everyone else), but occasionally there may be more – the players intervening in a conflict in progress between two existing sides, for example. Then, figure out which side has the edge. One side usually has the obvious initiative (a pursuer drops out of the alleyway and jams on the accelerator to get behind his prey's car, one side spots the other); everyone on that side goes first, and their opposition goes second. If there's a standoff, someone (player or GM) may well just declare an action – "I draw my gun", or "I punch the guy in the face". Whoever declares their action first earns initiative for their side!

Characters can act in any order during their side's turn. Once everyone on a side has taken their action, the next side begins its turn; the characters do not need to retain the same order during their next turn, but must wait until the opposing side has acted.

Taking Turns

On their turn, each participant determines what they want to do. Actions generally just imply attempting an opposed or unopposed task. Say Aleph-null is trying to hack the Harland & Associates human resources database, while being actively opposed by the company's lead security expert. Aleph must complete her goals (essentially a complex task) while holding off the security guy's attempts to trace her and shut her down.

On her turn, Aleph has a few choices. She could attack a system, lay down a defensive program, or something else along those lines (whatever the player comes up with that makes sense for the situation). Most of those are unopposed rolls, **AP** vs. a target number. Meanwhile, the security expert can bolster his system's defenses by activating intrusion countermeasures (increasing the target numbers Aleph faces), or try to actively disrupt her by tracing her connection, an opposed **AP** vs. **AP** task, and then once she's been found, killing the connection, which would be another opposed task, or even counter-hacking her system once she's been traced, in which case their roles are reversed.

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Time scale
The nature of a conflict determines the length of time, in story terms, each turn represents. Essentially, what's the length of time of a typical "action", in which one side has the opportunity to affect the other? In combat, shots are exchanged pretty rapidly, so turns are only a few seconds. In a car chase, road features change regularly – but not constantly – so turns are something between fifteen seconds and a minute.

Overwatch
If you don't want to act during your side's turn, preferring to react to another character's action, you can go on overwatch. You must declare your intentions, at least in general terms – that is, what you intend to do when the opportunity arises (shoot at a target that pops up, counter an attack, and so forth), but you take no action on your side's turn. At any point before your side's next turn, you can jump in and follow through on your intentions – including interrupting an action in progress. If you don't take your action (whether the opportunity never came, or you changed your mind) before your next turn comes up, you do nothing that turn.

Tokens to keep track of turns
Since units can act in any order, it can be helpful to have some way to mark who has taken their turn to assist in planning your side's remaining actions. If you're using a dry-erase mat or other easily erasable map, simply putting marks near characters who have acted will work; another option that is used in other games is to have a card or token you can flip over to mark whether a player is still to act or not.

Ending a Conflict
A conflict ends when it reaches its logical conclusion – that is, at least one of the three points in **What is a Conflict?**, above, no longer holds. Either all sides but one drop out or are eliminated, or they cease to compete (either because of a truce or a transition to a new conflict). In combat, for example, when everyone on one side surrenders, flees, or is incapacitated, the combat ends. There's no sense bothering with turns when the characters are just interrogating the survivors and searching for their equipment.

When are non-combat conflicts over?
It can be hard to tell when a conflict that isn't just characters beating each other into submission should end. For example, Aleph hacking a system while it's being actively monitored and defended. It's pretty obvious if Aleph wins – she gets the information she's looking for. But what about the sysadmin? When does he succeed? If you aren't sure, have the GM set up an Objective List for each side. Whichever side completes their objectives first wins. (See **Objective Lists** for more on how they work, but it's pretty simple – when you take an action that completes a goal, check a box. Your overall task is achieved when you've completed all the goals.)

Transitioning to a new conflict
Sometimes, an existing conflict no longer matters. If the prey in a car chase turns to attack their pursuers instead of flee, we're no longer dealing with a car chase; we have a new conflict (a combat), which also means re-establishing turn order and switching time scales as necessary.

Simultaneous Conflicts
Sometimes, two conflicts happen in the same space and time. For example, one protagonist is involved in a gunfight on a high-speed train, while his ally is trying to chase the same train in his car and catch up. A typical car chase might have turns fifteen seconds to a minute long, while combat turns last three to five seconds at most. If you run into two conflicts happening simultaneously that suggest two different time scales for turns, use the shorter time scale. In this example, have each turn in both the driving and the combat conflict be the handful of seconds of a combat turn. The reasoning is twofold:

- It's hard to keep track of two time scales at once. It's easy to let one side get far ahead of the other, and then when the two sides ultimately come together, have no idea what happened when.
- It's boring to be the guy on the slow end of the time scale. If I'm taking one turn for every five that the GM and the guy next to me get, I'll lose interest quickly.

What about Combat?
Action movies have a lot of combat. Because you see so much fighting and combat in action stories, combat has a few customized rules; see **Combat**, next, for more. But essentially, combat is just a kind of conflict whose goal is to cause the opposing side to surrender or retreat. When people stop shooting, slashing, and punching, for one reason or another, the conflict ends.

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Combat

Combat is a special variety of conflict with its own rules. We determine turn priority, the same way as any other conflict, and then characters act in succession in combat turns. Each side takes turns one after the other until one side is defeated, surrenders, escapes, or some other situation terminates the battle.

Time and Turns

On their turn, characters may perform one declared action, and/or move a reasonable distance, as well as possibly performing one or more incidental actions (like drawing or holstering weapons, talking, pressing buttons, etc.) Combat turns usually last about five to ten seconds; actions that can be completed in this time take one turn. Involved or time-consuming actions may take more turns to resolve; for example, it takes more than three seconds to hack a computer terminal, especially in the midst of a gunfight! A character can move about as far in a turn as he could normally reach in three to five seconds, given his pace of movement; if there is doubt as to whether the character could reach a target point in one turn, make a **Speed** roll.

Passage of Time and Simultaneity

Turns are a necessity for the way the action in *Measure of a Badass* is abstracted. For the most part, each participant's turn happens at the same time. It's easy to forget that the characters don't literally act in turn, in a bubble, where everyone else is frozen in time. For example, a character leaning out around cover to attack an enemy is exposed to return fire, even if she "ducks back around the corner" immediately after firing (at the end of her turn). The fact that her body is exposed, even for a short amount of time, means that she can be attacked (though she gains advantage (+2) to her defense for the cover), since she's provided a window of opportunity to her enemies who are effectively acting at the same time, though an instant later.

Incidental Actions

Actions that take less than a second or so don't generally require you to take a turn to perform them, unless you take several in succession. Drawing a weapon is effectively instantaneous; dropping to the prone position takes no time, although standing up may be harder. Shouting quick orders, hand signals, etc. also take effectively no time. The list of actions that qualify is lengthy. Use your best judgment, and if in doubt, let the character make a **Speed** roll to attempt an action quickly.

Attacks and Defenses

If a character attacks another combatant, he must make an opposed roll against the target. The attacker's stat is determined by the type of attack:

- Light CQC (attacks that rely on quickness and precision more than raw power): **Speed** *or* **Strength**
- Strong CQC (attacks that rely on raw power predominantly): **Strength**
- Aimed ranged attacks: **Perception**
- Attacks with thrown weapons: **Speed** *or* **Strength** (if you're throwing something heavy, or going for distance, **Strength** only)
- Mental attacks: usually **Aptitude**

The defender's stat depends on how the defender can avoid being hit or affected:

- Avoid physical hits: **Speed**
- Resist physical effects (e.g. stuns, poison, disorientation, knockdown): **Strength**
- See through a ruse: **Perception**
- Willpower/mental resistance: **Aptitude**

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Attacks and defenses examples

Duke squares up with a pair of bodyguards outside Club 206, a cover business for a drug smuggling ring in Seattle. The thugs rush him, but Duke steps to one side, preferring to line them up and deal with them one at a time. He ducks a wild haymaker and readies a palm strike (trying to knock the guy out, the standard complication being a miss); since Duke's going for a power strike, and the foe is just trying to dodge, the roll is **ST** vs. **SP**. Duke gets a total of 10 on his attack roll, while the thug comes up well short with a 6. Duke drives his palm squarely into the bouncer's gut, and the GM grants Duke a bonus effect for the strong hit, which Duke uses to knock the guy to the ground using a quick foot-sweep...

Bishop and his team stack up at the side of an enemy-fortified bunker. Bishop hopes for a quick and lethal breach, hoping to end it in one turn if he can. He cracks open the door slowly, and tosses in a flashbang grenade, hoping to stun the enemies inside to limit return fire. He's throwing a grenade, so he can use **Strength** or **Speed**; his **Strength** is higher, so he uses that. The five enemies are in the same boat, and since they can just tough out the distraction from a flashbang, they can defend with **Strength** as well. The roll is **ST** vs. **ST**, and since it's an attack affecting multiple targets individually, the complication for each of them is that they tough out and avoid the stun. Bishop rolls a 7, while the five enemies in the room get 11, 8, 6, 5, and 2. Since the roll is multiply opposed, margin doesn't matter; the 6, 5, and 2 are stunned for a turn, and the 11 and 8 successfully resist. Not ideal, but it's enough – with only two targets able to react this turn, Bishop calls them out as priority targets and leads the charge…

A turn or two later, the active shooters are bleeding out on the ground, and the ones left are just piecing together what's happening, when Jenna moves in – originally wanting to negotiate their surrender peacefully, they might be less inclined to resist now. Jenna shouts, "*On the ground, on the ground! Drop 'em, hands on your head!"* An intimidation attack is a roll of **Aptitude** vs. **Aptitude**. The intent is to get the enemy to drop their weapon and lie down, with the potential complication that they resist and continue to fight. Being in a fortified bunker, ordinarily they wouldn't have much reason to surrender (and would probably get advantage (+2) on their rolls to resist); now, however, they've just lost half their squad, so they're a little bit more pliable. Jenna rolls a 9, while the enemies get a 3, 6, and 10. The two enemies hit do as they're told, while the last continues to clutch his rifle and raises it to fire…

Ramirez braces his Mk. 46 LMG against the hood of his FAV, peering down the sights at the four-man patrol of Val Verde occupation forces. With Lynx sneaking around to the side to flank and assault them, Ramirez needs to draw their attention and keep them pinned down with a few long bursts of automatic fire. Suppression and covering fire are mainly intended to keep the enemy's head down; it's a normal attack with a couple of twists. First, cover and concealment don't count – the attacker's not trying to hit their target necessarily, just keep their head down. Second, if the targets want to get to a better position and not be pinned, they'll have to do it quickly; sometimes, though, there isn't a better position, so the targets can just choose to stay where they are and not bother rolling defense, in the hopes that someone else will take out the suppressing unit and free them to move. Finally, enemies that are successfully suppressed are automatically hit for the weapon's normal Power if they later expose themselves to that gunfire at all (even leaning out to see who's suppressing, or blind fire, will trigger the hit). If they *have* to move, they still can, but they're going to have to pay for it. Ramirez is making a ranged attack with his LMG, so he rolls **Perception**, and gets advantage (+2) from the fact that he's using an Autofire weapon for suppression (see **Weapon Tags**); the enemies are trying to move to a better position, so they'll roll **Speed**. The goal is to force the enemies to stay under cover, with the potential complication being that they find an opening and can move to outmaneuver Ramirez's fire. Ramirez nails a natural 10 on the die for 14 total, while his enemies roll two 6s, a 9, and a 10 – but they're hit regardless with the natural 10. Hearing the dozens of 5.56mm rounds buzzing over and around them, they hold position and look for some kind of harder cover, while Lynx moves to their left flank, closing for the kill…

Defending an object or vehicle

If an object is being held or driven by someone, or moves under its own power, its owner may make a defense roll for it using his **Speed** stat. (An unattended or immobile object still rolls defense, but its **Speed** is -4.) The attacker's roll may be modified based on the size of the target; big targets provide advantage, small ones provide disadvantage.

Defending someone else

Every now and again, someone will jump into the path of a bullet to save the president, or dive on a grenade to heroically save the rest of the squad. An attempt to defend someone else from a physical attack is a **Speed** roll with disadvantage (-2) (if you use Overwatch with the intent to defend someone, or spend a Badass Point to defend them as an action, ignore the penalty); on success, you're automatically hit, but the original target of the attack is spared. In any case, you can only do this once per turn. Complications might include taking the attack on the chin (suffering a more powerful strike), failing to defend the original target and finding yourself out of position as a consequence (taking disadvantage to your next attack or defense), or, if the attack was a Spreading, Autofire, or Radius attack, being hit *and* failing to defend your target, who must still make a normal defense roll. On a strong hit, you might both be missed.

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Armor

Characters may wear armor to reduce the effectiveness of enemy attacks. Armor possesses two attributes that affect combat: *Armor Rating* and *Load*. A character receives his armor's Armor Rating as a bonus to his Resistance rolls against any damage that armor could reasonably absorb. Heavy armor (like other heavy gear) increases a character's Load score; having Load higher than your Strength slows you down (see **Load** under **Gearing Up**, later.)

Shields

Shields can be used to block incoming attacks. You must be able to perceive the incoming attack and feasibly defend against it with a shield (bullets and close combat weapon strikes are okay; grenades and oncoming traffic probably aren't). If a shield can reasonably be applied, it counts as cover – you gain advantage (+2) to your defense roll against the attack.

Dual Wielding

Unless you have an ability that says otherwise, firing two weapons at the same target works the same way mechanically as using one (if they're different, the attacker picks the one that counts). It does look pretty cool, though.

Weapon Range

Ranged weapons have one of three range categories, as follows:

- *Short*: The effective range of a handgun, SMG, shotgun, or thrown weapons – within shouting distance.
- *Long*: The effective range of a light- or medium-caliber rifle or machine gun – about the range a human can possibly see another human without magnifying lenses.
- *Extreme*: The effective range of specially-crafted sniper cartridges, anti-materiel guns, or most vehicular ordinance; potentially further than the eye can see.

A character *cannot* use a weapon to attack an opponent beyond the weapon's range category, and if attempted, such an attack will automatically miss. Occasionally, weapons may have trouble at closer ranges; for instance, using an anti-materiel rifle, which is normally fitted with a high-powered scope, against a target at Short range probably means disadvantage (-2) on the attack roll.

Firing ranged weapons in CQC

It's hard to bring a ranged weapon to bear in close combat. If an enemy is in close combat range with you, you can still reasonably fire at them with handguns at disadvantage (-2), but any sort of two-handed weapon is too long to bring to bear. (Most ranged weapons can still be used as bludgeons.) The same penalties apply when trying to attack someone *else* while an enemy is engaging you in CQC.

Also, an enemy actively engaging you in a melee can also use well-timed swipes from a hand weapon (or rifle/pistol butt) to interfere with attempts to disengage from CQC – that is to say, you can't just "back up and fire" without repercussions. Remember that your and the enemy's actions are happening roughly simultaneously; they're not just standing there while you calmly back away!

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Special Actions

A standard attack is one or more swipes with a CQC weapon, a couple of punches, kicks, or throws, or a single shot or handful of shots at range. (The specifics are up to description, but they're handled with a single attack roll.) Special actions operate alongside attacks or defenses; using one changes a few of the normal rules about how an attack or defense is handled. (Incidentally, if a few of these special actions just seem like extensions of the basic four actions, good, because that's exactly what they are.)

- *Target weak point:* When making an attack, if you know of a weak point on the target, you can attempt to hit it. This is just like a normal attack; the GM will tell you what will happen if you hit it (like disabling a weapon, reducing or ignoring a target's armor, or similar), and possibly apply disadvantage to the roll (if the weak point is small or hard to hit, or if your weapon isn't powerful enough to guarantee the effect you want). You can't target a weak point if you don't know of one; you may need to spend an action discovering a weak point before you or an ally can target it. *Important:* Regardless of circumstances or the weak point that's targeted, a target will never lose more than one Health point from a single attack.
- *Aim:* Spend one turn aiming a ranged weapon at a target (and doing nothing else, except maybe moving slowly), or waiting for an enemy to present an opening in CQC. On your next turn, as long as neither you nor your target move unexpectedly before you attack, your next attack against that target (and only that target) gains advantage (+2).
- *Guard*: Actively concentrate on defending yourself from incoming attacks. You can move, but you can't take any other action (except incidental actions, like reloading, opening doors, etc.) You receive advantage (+2) to defense rolls until your next turn against opponents you can see or detect.
- *Split attack:* With two one-handed weapons, you can attack two different targets. If the weapons are different, apply one weapon's Power and Tags to one opponent, and the other to the second. Make one attack roll with disadvantage (-2). Both defenders make their own defense roll.
- *Overwatch* (repeated from **Taking Turns**): Declare your intentions – what you intend to do when the opportunity arises – but take no action. At any point before your side's next turn, you can jump in and follow through with your action – including interrupting an action in progress – as long as it matches your intentions. If you don't take your action before your next turn comes up, you do nothing that turn.

Added effects and alternate attacks

In the **Attacks and Defenses examples** from earlier, there were a few special attacks and effects that are a little more subtle than using a weapon to inflict injury to a target – things like disarms, knockdowns, and suppressive fire. Strong hits on attack rolls can grant you a few of these effects, but you can also just make an attack with the intent to do one of them. They work just like a normal attack, as you've seen; stat vs. stat, with the intended result happening on a hit. The only caveat is that they have to make sense for the circumstances; you can't really disarm someone with a grenade, or suppress them with a single-shot crossbow, for instance. In certain cases, attacking for a special effect may be *targeting a weak point*.

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Weapon Tags

Characters can and will bring a wide variety of weapons to bear on their opponents. Their basic capabilities are defined by Power and Range category, but Tags explain unusual powers and special effects. Each tag adjusts the rules for a weapon's attacks in one or more ways.

Target selection

- *Spreading*: Spreading weapons deliver their effect through a spread of smaller projectiles. This provides a few benefits:
  - The weapon gains +1 Power (which is already factored into the chart in **Gear**, later).
  - Attacks suffer reduced penalties (ignore the first -2) when the attacker has a bead on a target's position but not an exact one, like shooting at a target behind concealment (like brush or paper walls), smoke, or dim light; or when attacking small targets (attacking something smaller than, say, a housecat usually applies disadvantage to an attack).
  - An attacker can fire at a couple of tightly clustered targets with one shot (standing side-by-side, or in a very narrow cone – two human-sized targets, possibly more if the targets are smaller or very close together).
- *Sweeping:* Sweeping weapons are CQC weapons that have the ability to clear long, wide arcs with a swing. These provide two benefits:
  - An attacker can swing at a couple of tightly-clustered targets within an arc in front of them.
  - An attacker gains advantage (+2) to attacks intended to trip an opponent instead of damaging them.
- *Radius*: Some projectiles explode in a blast rather than delivering damage through direct impact. This weapon attacks any target within a few meters of the impact point. Targets gain cover bonuses to defense if there is some piece of cover between them and the *impact point*, rather than between them and the attacker.
- *Autofire*: The weapon fires long bursts of ammunition with one pull of the trigger. This provides a few benefits:
  - The weapon gains +1 Power (which is already factored into the chart in **Gear**, later).
  - An attacker gains advantage (+2) to suppressive or covering fire attacks (fire intended to pin down an enemy instead of hurt them).
  - The attacker can choose to spray rounds to attack everyone in a narrow target arc (a tight group of targets in about a 45-degree cone — think a hallway, not an entire room).

Attack effects

- *Duration:* This weapon's effects last for a while. The weapon repeats its attack once per turn for three combat turns – the target must defend against the original attack roll each turn as long as he remains in the weapon's area of effect.
- *Continuous:* Once hit, a target continues to suffer ill effects. The attack's effects occur once each turn for three combat turns, unless the attacker successfully does something to stop them (putting himself out if he's on fire, for example). If these effects include damage, the attacker must resist the damage each turn and suffers Hits or injuries as normal.
- *Disorient:* This weapon distracts or harries those subject to its effects. Targets hit by the weapon receive a condition relevant to the weapon, and suffer disadvantage (-2) to all rolls that the condition would hamper until the end of the attacker's next turn.
- *Stun:* Stun weapons can knock targets out of a fight for a while. Targets hit by the weapon are unable to take significant actions on their next turn, and may be blinded or deafened depending on the weapon. They can still move (slowly) and *possibly* perform an incidental action, but that's it. A stunned target also suffers disadvantage (-2) to defense rolls.
- *Concealment:* The radius of the weapon's effect produces a smoke or debris cloud sufficient to block line of sight. Characters attempting to see or attack a target through this cloud suffer disadvantage (-2); the Spreading or Radius weapon tags can negate this.

Aiming and range

- *Indirect:* These weapons can perform indirect fire attacks on a target the firer can't hit directly. If the attacker lacks line of sight to the target, a forward observer can relay the target's position to the attacker; otherwise, the attack suffers serious disadvantage (-4), the normal penalty for attacking a target you can't see at all.
- *Homing:* This weapon is equipped with a target-sensing device to lock onto targets, which has several effects:
  - The attacker must spend one turn locking onto a target (which the target may be able to evade with a **Speed** roll); if the weapon is locked, you gain serious advantage (+4) to the subsequent attack. If the target is aware of the missile lock (some vehicles carry missile warning sensors), it may attempt to evade the lock (**SP** vs. **PC**) or break it by using countermeasures such as chaff, flares, etc., as its action on its turn. Homing weapons generally can't lock on to personnel, though some advanced (hyper-tech) versions might.
  - If the weapon lacks a lock, or the lock is broken, attacks either suffer disadvantage (-2) instead, or cannot be fired at all, depending on the weapon's safety mechanisms.

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Miscellaneous

- *Quiet*: Guns, chainsaws, and similar weapons give themselves away when used. Guns can be suppressed, but they still give off a fairly loud sound (which doesn't quite sound like a gunshot – see **Suppressed Firearms** under **Gearing Up**). Weapons with the Quiet tag, on the other hand, make so little noise as to not raise suspicion at all.

Detrimental tags

- *Heavy*: Heavy weapons are difficult to maneuver with. They are unusually bulky, massive, or both. Characters suffer +1 Load for each Heavy item they carry.
- *Reload:* The weapon must be reset between shots, a process which takes a few seconds. The attacker must reload the weapon as an incidental action before firing again. The attacker can still perform other actions on the same turn, but any active physical actions (including firing the weapon again, but *not* including defense rolls) on that turn suffer disadvantage (-2).
- *Limited:* The ammunition for this weapon is heavy, bulky, or otherwise unwieldy, so you generally can't carry more than a few rounds. You may run out entirely after you attack with this weapon a few times.

Common Sources of Circumstantial Advantage and Disadvantage in Combat

You can gain advantage to attack rolls by:

- Flanking your target (attacking him from an angle at least 90 degrees separated from another ally's angle of attack), whether using CQC or ranged attacks
- Attacking a target much bigger than you
- Having spent an action carefully aiming at the target on your previous turn
- Locking on with a homing weapon applies serious advantage (+4).

You might suffer disadvantage to attack rolls when:

- Attacking a target hidden in darkness or dense concealment (foliage, smoke, fog, and so on)
  - Attacking a target you can't see at all (like blind-fire around a corner, in complete pitch-black darkness, or because you're actually blind) applies serious disadvantage (-4).
- Attacking a very small or fast-moving target (unless you have a weapon with the Spreading or Radius tags)
- Distracted by an external source (very loud noise, teargas, irritants)
- Your attack is blown off-course by strong wind (using slow projectiles like arrows or catapults, smoke or distraction weapons, or gunshots at Extreme range)
- Attacking an enemy engaging you in CQC range, using a handgun (you can't use a longarm at all against a target within arm's reach)
  - Don't forget that an enemy within arm's reach can interfere with your attacks against others!
- In a fast-moving vehicle over uneven terrain, driving a vehicle, or riding a mount
- An ally is in the way (if you miss the roll, it's because you can't get a bead on the target without hitting your ally)

You can gain advantage to defense rolls by:

- Using cover
  - Being only slightly exposed to enemy fire (e.g. blind-firing around a corner) provides serious advantage (+4).
- Under concealment, like smoke, darkness, or dense foliage
- Going prone when your attacker is at Long range or longer
- Being in a vehicle that's moving fast (relative to your attacker)

You might suffer disadvantage to defense rolls when:

- Stunned
- Badly distracted by an external source (very loud noise, being blinded by bright light, teargas, irritants)
- Unaware of your attacker
- Attacked in CQC (or from very close range) while prone, or in a compromising or unstable position

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Badass Points

The measure of a badass is in the awesome things they do and say that people will remember forever. Actions becoming of a Badass are rewarded in play; Badass Points are the currency.

If another person at the table finds an action taken by a character to be awesome, he can petition to award that player a Badass Point by saying, *"That was badass."* This prompts a quick discussion involving everyone at the table (except the nominee), GM and players both. If the consensus is that the action was badass, the player is awarded a Badass Point. Only player characters can gain Badass Points; other characters are at the mercy of their own abilities.

Doing versus describing

Read the phrase "an action taken by a character" strictly – all this means is that a character does something awesome, even if someone else at the table describes it! Some people aren't super-creative, and that's okay – but their characters can still get rewarded for being awesome! Don't be afraid to help someone describe their actions in an awesome way, as long as they're okay with the assistance.

Characters start out with one Badass Point, reflecting their innate badassness. Additional points must be earned. A character can carry a maximum of three Badass Points. If a character already has three, further points earned are lost. Also, at the end of a mission, any unused Badass Points are lost, so spend liberally!

Consensus doesn't necessarily mean the result of a vote; instead, look around the table and see if anyone is obviously skeptical of whether the move in question was badass enough to earn a point. If someone (player or GM) is withdrawing or asking questions like, "I don't know how Badass it is to just shoot a guy", give the player (or the nominee) a chance to better explain or describe the action, and see if you can bring it up to the critical participant's standards – if you can't, that's fine, drop it and move on, but more often, shining a spotlight on the action, or letting its results play out and using *them* as a bellwether will convince them. That's your audience; convince the most critical person at the table of how awesome your character was, and everyone else will follow.

Good ways to earn Badass Points include:

- Coming up with an awesome plan, and then executing it
- Viscerally describing an action shot by shot – whether successful or not
- Trying something bold and potentially crazy
- Delivering a movie-worthy quip before or after an action (for example, "You need to cool off!" before shooting a liquid nitrogen tank.)
- Revealing something about your character or her backstory that's immediately pertinent to the situation at hand

Examples

Bishop, the Tactical Commander, holds a finger to his ear, setting up a breach plan – "Tenmei, stay with me, we'll breach the doors on the left and right, and charge through on one. Watch for the guy with the shotgun overlooking the balcony; he's priority one. Lynx, you and Ramirez break out the rope, and on two, drop from the rafters on my mark." A moment later, the signal fires, and the action begins, Tenmei sending the gunner down a few stories with a well-placed bash from his three-section staff, and Ramirez and Lynx open up with streams of automatic fire from on high. "Damn, that was badass," Ramirez's player says, signaling. "Bishop, that plan rocked; loved how we just wrecked these guys' faces in one go." The table is in solid agreement, and Bishop's player marks a Badass Point.

Ming, the Gunslinger, engages an enemy in combat. "I dash across the room," his player describes, "firing as I go, dodging balletically." The attack connects and drops the enemy with a high roll for a strong hit. Leon's player signals: "That was badass." Raven's player shrugs and raises an eyebrow, unconvinced. "I dunno, he kind of just shot a guy." Leon's player rethinks, scratching his head, when Ming's player jumps back in: "Okay, yeah, 'balletically' is kind of weak. What about, I'm rushing across the room, and I'm right up next to this wall, right? Say I run up the wall, guns blazing, kick off and cartwheel through the air, and as I fire I nail the guy here, here and here –" Ming's player points to his shoulder, near his left hip, and the center of his diaphragm near the spine – "and he flies back and falls slumped against the back corner, right next to his buddy in the back with the rifle." "Okay, that's better, I'll buy that one!", Raven's player confirms, and Ming marks a Badass Point.

Spending Badass Points

Badass Points can be spent on four things. Using one or more Badass Points, you can:

- Improve the result of a roll
- Immediately take an action at any time, even if they've already acted during a conflict turn (see **Conflicts**), and even interrupt an opponent's action in progress

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- Retroactively take an action, called a *Creative Retcon*
- Declare an advantageous detail*,* declaring something to be true that would otherwise require a roll or be an arbitrary GM call

Badass Enough to Succeed

Every now and again, a Badass attempts to do something in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, and manages to pull it off regardless. Players can spend Badass Points to improve any roll; they're spent after the roll's result is revealed, not before. *Each Badass Point improves the result of the roll by one step* (strong miss to miss, miss to hit, hit to strong hit).

The sequence to this is important:

1. The player rolls, and the GM announces the result.
2. The player declares that she'd like to spend Badass Points to succeed, and decides whether to spend the points or not, assuming she has enough to do what she wants.
3. If she decides to spend the points, the player describes how her character, in a totally badass way, snatches victory from the jaws of defeat (or does something exceptionally awesome), and the GM's previous description is superseded.

Example: Jenna the Smooth Operator is standing across the room from a technician, brandishing her shotgun. She wants to intimidate him into logging into his computer so she can download the security codes for the missile room. This is her thing, and it's **Aptitude** vs. **Aptitude**; however, her player gets a mediocre roll, a 4 – even with Jenna's **Aptitude** of +2 and a +1 bonus from her *Crazy eyes* Boost, she ends up with only a 7 total, while the baddie gets lucky (for him) and rolls a 9 total, a miss for Jenna. Since this a mental attack (see **Attacks and Defenses**, later), the GM picks *the enemy gets to a better position* – in this case, the position is metaphorical; it turns out the tech's superiors are so overbearing that he fears them more than that shotgun! ("No way," says the tech. "Do you have any idea what they'll do to me if they find out I helped you?") Jenna has a Badass Point to dispose of, and she doesn't want to have to resort to more drastic measures, so she spends it. (Jenna pumps her shotgun – *chick-chack* – and reiterates: "Maybe so, but I can do worse." The scientist recoils for a moment before turning to his terminal and hurriedly entering the password. "All right, all right! Who knows, maybe I can bug out of this place before they find me.")

Bonus Actions

In a conflict or combat, you might find yourself wanting to do something *right now*. Maybe you need to take a shot at the escaping mastermind before he escapes, or disarm the drug-addled giant before he guts you with fish hooks, or maybe just take out an entire squad before they can call for reinforcements. Players can spend one Badass Point to gain an extra turn in a conflict or combat at any time. "Any time" means exactly what it says – even if you've just acted, even if you interrupt another unit's action already in progress. Doesn't matter. If your follow-up action doesn't manage to succeed, you can always spend another point to improve its result! The only catch is that you cannot do exactly the same action you most recently did – either your action or its target must be different. So while you can't just keep hitting the guy over and over with your baton, you can knock his gun out of his hand!

While the Overwatch action can be used to interrupt an opponent's action in progress, spending a Badass Point lets you get away with it even if you've taken your action this turn. But if you're short on Badass Points but still want to see if your opponent will take an action you'd rather prevent, Overwatch can be the right call.

Creative Retcon

Sometimes, there's something you wish you'd picked up, pressed, or done in the previous scene, or a useful gear item you wish you'd taken. This game is about doing badass things, not wishing you could do badass things, and sometimes, action heroes just happen to have the right item at the right time. (An enemy throws a smoke grenade, but your Shadow would reasonably have thought to grab infrared goggles, and has a Gear Point left to spend.) If you find yourself in this situation, you can ask for a *creative retcon*. Explain what you intended to do or take, and why it makes sense for you to have done so at the time. If the GM approves, and you have a Badass Point handy, you can spend the point to have the item, or have done the thing. The GM can also suggest a creative retcon to offer your character a solution to an intractable problem. ("If you had grabbed the Fist Lieutenant's rifle at the end of the last fight, you could probably hit that guy at Long range. Interested in a Retcon?") You are not obligated to accept, but if you choose to, spend the point as before. The creative retcon cannot be used to undo something you've already done, or to perform an action that would create a paradox (when the team turns left at a fork in the road, fail to spot an ambush, and find themselves embroiled in a fight at an enemy camp, a player couldn't use Creative Retcon to instead have turned right.) If an action in a Creative Retcon requires a roll, and that roll fails (providing the player no benefit), don't spend the point; *Badass Points can't be spent to no benefit*.

(If a player mentions an action a character would have done if they had information they should have had at the time – for example, "The enemy jumps through the trapdoor." "Wait, there was a trapdoor? If I'd known, I would've taken it." – retroactively taking that action should be free, since the character was missing information due to the GM's oversight and through no fault of the player.)

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Declaring Advantageous Detail

Action heroes are good, without a doubt. Of course, every now and then, they're just lucky. The criminal they were called in to apprehend just happened to have a rocket launcher with them (*Nash Bridges*). Or the 1337 h4x0r just happened to read a Wikipedia page about an obscure encryption mechanism and do some independent research that comes up at just the right time. Or the classic, a barrel full of highly explosive fuel happens to sit in the wrong place. In any case, it's a convenient coincidence that conspires to make things go right at just the right time. A player can spend one Badass Point to have a coincidence that plays to the team's benefit.

GMs have the right to veto or ask the player to explain or revise coincidences that are too big, convenient, or too out of place, especially if it seems like a non sequitur based on the situation at hand, or the table doesn't think it makes sense. Similarly, the GM doesn't have to charge a point if the detail seems like it fits right in – if a player describes something that makes perfect sense or fits in with the idea you had of the scene, just let it happen and watch the awesome!

Example: Raven the Eagle Eye cradles her sniper rifle on the rigging in Darius's helicopter. They survey a troop transport train from a safe distance, trying to figure out the best way to stop it quickly. Raven's player thinks for a second and asks the GM: "What are the odds that the train has some kind of fail-safe braking mechanism? Say, if I shoot out the hydraulic line, the whole train will stop to prevent it from derailing?" "I dunno," says the GM, "I mean, the idea of a fail-safe makes sense, but the system would take a while to lose pressure, and there are easily dozens of wheels and brakes on the train. But if you want to spend a Badass Point, I'll let that happen." "Sure, why not?" Raven erases the point and describes the plan to Darius, before pulling the stock just a little bit right and taking aim for the hydraulic line.

The Watermark: What's worthy of a Badass Point?

Measure of a Badass, like any other roleplaying game, occurs in the mind's eye. Actions and scenes play out like a movie in the participants' minds. This game takes that metaphor one step further; it is intended to play out like an action movie. Picture yourself in a seat at the cinema, watching the spectacle. A wild and crazy stunt, a sweet one-liner (not off-color or misplaced humor, mind), the hero persevering in a tough battle, quick thinking that leads to a decisive turn of events; those are the things that moviegoers turn up for, again and again, a self-indulgent ballet of energy and destruction.

Imagine you're part of a focus group for a movie. The producers of the film have equipped the seats with a signaling button. When something happens that you're excited about and want to see more of, you can press it. The producers look at the list of scenes, find the things that a lot of people voted for, and the writers will work to accommodate the choices of the audience in future scenes and future films. You want to make sure you vote for the things that please you, but not feed the writers so much noise that they can't separate the awesome from the merely good.

That's exactly what you're doing when you make Badass Point nominations. Let someone do something awesome, watch the film in your brain, and if you'd hit that button, vote for a Badass Point. Your friends will respond by continuing to do the things that make the film keep you on the edge of your seat.

Physical Tokens

Players will earn and spend a lot of Badass Points over the course of the game. Instead of making marks on their character sheet and potentially erasing a hole in it, there's nothing wrong with using physical tokens (like poker chips, glass beads, and so forth) to represent those points. The GM will hand you one when you earn it, and you hand it back when it's spent. It can also be useful to reinforce the reward – a tangible token to hold up and say, "I think he just earned a Badass Point". It's very much a preference thing – paper or tokens, use whatever the table is more comfortable with.

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Archetypes

Action heroes, with rare exception, have a schtick, the central technique a film or episode concentrates on. This doesn't necessarily relate to their career or occupation – Tequila Yuen is a police inspector, sure, but at heart he's a balletic Gunslinger, diving around the room firing from a pair of blazing pistols – and that's what we know him for. These singular foci are referred to as Archetypes, and they're your Badass's calling card.

As a player, before deciding anything else about your character, figure out which Archetype you want to play. Make the rest of your decisions – stats, abilities, equipment – based on your role and how you wish to fill it, making sure to cross-train and fill in gaps in the group's capability.

The Archetype List (an Overview)

- *The Gunslinger*: an expert in close-quarters handgun combat, wielding two weapons with the ease of one.
- *The Soldier*: a tough-as-nails combatant, packing the heaviest weaponry and armor.
- *The Eagle Eye*: a master scout and sniper, with the ability to hit anything, at any range, with any weapon.
- *The Shadow*: a stealthy infiltrator and assassin, skirting the edge of perception.
- *The Wheelman*: a prodigy behind the controls of any vehicle imaginable.
- *The Iron Hand*: a consummate master in the art of unarmed combat.
- *The Weapon Master*: a modern-day samurai, who uses hand weapons to deadly effect against any opponent.
- *The Field Medic*: a medical and biochemical expert able to treat any condition, buff allies, and afflict enemies.
- *The Sapper*: a brilliant engineer in the business of creating solutions from any physical system.
- *The 1337 h4x0r:* a computer whiz who can crack anything remotely, bringing the enemy's hardware to bear against them.
- *The Smooth Operator*: a psychological con artist, able to use wiles and calculated moves to get what she wants.
- *The Tactical Commander*: a master tactician, able to lead a team to victory against any odds.

Boosts

With each Archetype, you'll find a list of five Boosts. These Boosts are the abilities best associated with that Archetype; if you want to play a "pure Gunslinger", for example, you can just choose three Gunslinger Boosts and get to playing. You aren't limited to the boosts on your Archetype's list, and in fact, you're not required to choose *any* of them from your list at all! You can use this as a guide if your character's concept is a hybrid of two Archetypes; if you wanted to play a hostage negotiator, for example, you could use the core of the Smooth Operator and pair it with Boosts from the Tactical Commander, for example. A vigilante cop dealing out justice on the streets could be built with the core of the Gunslinger and Boosts from the Iron Hand or Weapon Master (or the other way around!). You're really only limited by your own creativity.

Evolution Options

After you've played for a while (at least three missions), you'll have the opportunity to "Evolve" into a hybrid of multiple archetypes. The Evolution Options of an Archetype are the ways members of another Archetype can gain a foothold in that Archetype's typical field of mastery. More details are in the **Advancement and Evolution** section, but for now, review the Evolution Options in other Archetypes, and if you like one, pick a Boost or two in that Archetype to begin working toward it. You'll need to eventually have at least one Boost in a particular Archetype to Evolve into it.

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The Gunslinger

"Ming, you're alive!" shouted Yuhong, a look of concern on his face. Ming didn't buy it.

"No thanks to you, wang ba dan*. You sent me – and my friends – into an ambush. I should have known better than to trust a criminal."*

"Strong words from a former Blue Lotus," snapped Yuhong, taken aback. Ming's eyes narrowed. "The difference between you and me, Yuhong, is that I learned from my past. Where is your honor?" "You failed me, Ming. You should have accepted your death." Yuhong smiled an artificial smile.

"Perhaps," Ming replied, contemplating briefly. "Instead, I accepted yours." Both men drew their weapons in a flash – Ming's Tokarevs snapped to his hands, as Yuhong produced his own CZ-75s. Ming and Yuhong stared down their gunsights at each other. Each knew only one of them would leave alive; they disagreed on which one it would be. At once, the two side doors of the meeting hall burst open, and four men poured out of each one, weapons trained on Ming's position. Ming had his own ideas. He dropped to a knee and swung each arm to his side, putting one round neatly in the chest of each of the interlopers, before returning his aim to Yuhong, still stunned from the fact that four of his trusted bodyguards had fallen in a second, without firing a shot. "Enough of your games, Yuhong. If you intend to kill me, then have the courage to do it yourself."

The Gunslinger is a striker *par excellence*, dealing death from one or a pair of blazing pistols. (Example: Inspector "Tequila" Yuen, *Hard Boiled*; Neo, aka Thomas Anderson, *The Matrix;* John Hartigan, *Sin City*)

Core Abilities

- **Pistol master:** You are a consummate master in the art – and it is an art – of close-quarters combat with the handgun. You get the following bonuses when attacking with one-handed firearms:
    - Attacks using one-handed firearms gain +1 Power. If you fire two one-handed firearms at the same target, attacks gain an additional +1 Power (for a total of +2).
    - Ignore the disadvantage penalty when making a split attack using two one-handed firearms.
    - +1 to attack rolls using a *single* one-handed firearm (not dual-wielding).
- **Can't be hit:** In order to win a gunfight, you have to dodge bullets. You gain +1 to defense rolls, as long as you've moved significantly since your last turn.

Evolution Options
Take *Can't be hit*, and choose either single or dual-pistol style. You gain the benefits of *Pistol master* when attacking with your chosen number of handguns.

Boosts

- **Akimbo:** +1 to Power when using two one-handed weapons (ranged or CQC) against the same target.
- **Pistol marksman:** +1 to attack rolls using one-handed firearms.
- **Collateral damage**: You can readily make pinpoint ranged shots to attack terrain features to cause damage and destruction (catwalks, chandeliers, explosive barrels), and gain +1 to rolls made to both locate and attack these features.
- **Never stop moving**: +1 to defense rolls while in open terrain (dodging, not benefitting from cover).
- **Contact shot**: When you make a single shot attack (i.e. not using Autofire) using one or more one-handed firearms against a target within arm's reach, you may treat the weapon as a light CQC weapon for the purposes of attacks (**ST**/**SP** to hit, no disadvantage penalty). When used in this way, the attack's Power increases by 2.

Playing a Gunslinger

The Gunslinger's primary role is as a highly mobile striker. Left unchecked, he can dish out exceptional damage to enemy point targets. The Gunslinger has two choices of style, best chosen based on the situation – either highly accurate fire from a single handgun, or brutally powerful attacks with a pair of handguns. Therefore, a smart Gunslinger chooses a variety of single and/or paired handguns to handle a variety of tasks. *Contact shot* is an interesting, if risky, Boost to take, given that the Gunslinger generally won't want to be close to his target; if he does get involved in a melee, though, he goes from disadvantaged to a heavy hitter.

By virtue of his presence at the forefront of a fight combined with his preference for light armor, and his reliance on guns, the Gunslinger's most important stats by far are **Speed** and **Perception**. **Strength** (or the *Unbreakable* boost from the Iron Hand) makes him more resilient, though his attention is generally better spent focusing on avoiding damage altogether.

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The Soldier

Ramirez looked over his Mk 46 again; fresh belt, bipod deployed. They come over that ridge, *he reassured himself,* and that's the end of it.

"Are we ready?" Lynx rolled on her heels, adrenaline pumping. "Anytime now…"

Lynx's impatience grew tiring. "Not yet!" barked Ramirez. He planted the machine gun's bipod on the roof of the Fast Attack Vehicle. Three, two, one. *At his side, he reached to the radio detonator hanging on his hip. At each count, he pressed the button, once, twice, three times. The jungle ahead erupted into a fireball, as broken metal rained onto the clearing in front of them. "**Now, Lynx!**"*

He laid on the trigger, firing round after round at nothing in particular, as Lynx dashed into the tree cover in an eyeblink. "Just keep your heads down, chumps..." Incidental fire glanced off the FAV's hood, to no effect. "Come on, Lynx, move!" Then, flash after flash in the treetops, as man after man fell to the quiet taps of Lynx's suppressed submachine gun. Ramirez smiled.

The Soldier is an expert in heavy weaponry, capable of taking on anything the enemy throws at him, and putting his allies into position to succeed by standing tall against overwhelming odds. (Examples: John Rambo, *First Blood Part II;* Blain Cooper, *Predator*)

Core Abilities

- **Armed to the teeth:** You're always packing heat, carrying heavier weapons and armor than anyone else. You get two extra Gear Points at the start of every mission, but you must spend them on weapons or armor (or retain them for later spend).
- **Pack mule:** You're used to carrying a pack that weighs as much as you do. Your **Strength** score is considered 1 higher when calculating Load.
- **Weapon qualification:** You've tried out just about every gun out there. You get an extra Boost from the Soldier list (this is a bonus, and doesn't count toward the five total Boosts you need for Evolution). Additionally, when you encounter a weapon, you can immediately tell what it is, its history, and what it's capable of.

Evolution Options

Take *Weapon qualification,* and choose either *Armed to the teeth* or *Pack mule*.

Boosts

- **Volume of fire:** When using a weapon with the Autofire tag, you gain +1 to Power, and +1 to suppressive and covering fire attacks.
- **Heavy weapon expert:** +1 to attack rolls using heavy weapons, like grenade launchers, RPGs, mortars, and flamethrowers; also, ignore penalties to attack rolls from indirect fire.
- **Longarm marksman:** +1 to attack rolls making single-target attacks from a two-handed firearm, like a rifle or shotgun.
- **Grenadier:** +1 to attack rolls using hand grenades; also, ignore any penalties to attack rolls from cover, concealment, or skipping grenades off of surfaces.
- **Athlete:** +1 to rolls related to athletics, like climbing, jumping, swimming, or sprinting, and to rolls to resist fatigue.

Playing a Soldier

The Soldier's main role is showing up with bigger arms and armor than anyone else. He'll be the guy with the grenade launcher standing tall in a pitched battle, or the bodyguard with a compact assault rifle under his jacket, ready to lay down cover fire when things go wrong. As such, the Soldier is smart to focus his Boosts and equipment selection on being potent in combat before anything else; the team won't need a contingency plan in a fight if the Soldier *is* the contingency plan. Try to carry a variety of weapons, as well as gadgets like directional mines or C4, to handle any situation the enemy throws your way.

The Soldier is usually best served packing heavy armor and standing at the forefront of a battle. Given that he dishes out so much punishment, he'll likely be the first target for enemy aggression, so he needs to be able to stand up to withering firepower – therefore, having a high Resistance bonus is crucial. **Strength** and **Perception** are usually his most valuable stats; as a side benefit, high **Strength** makes a Soldier very effective in CQC when wielding a heavy weapon like an axe, club, fixed bayonet, or entrenching tool, or even simply delivering a butt stroke from a rifle. Good **Speed** (or a defensive Boost) may help to avoid attacks. If the Soldier intends to use planted explosive charges or perform other mental soldiering tasks, he might not want to forget **Aptitude**.

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The Eagle Eye

The target stood two hundred meters away. A man-sized metal silhouette, a cakewalk to hit. "Oh, come on, Raven," Sgt. Pearson quipped, "you've done this a hundred times." He kept a keen eye down his spotting scope, waiting for the shot to hit the mark, dead-on as always. He knew how it would end, the same way it always did. Raven was one with her rifle, a .338 Lapua Magnum DSR-1 with a Kevlar stock and furniture. The pinnacle of German engineering. She could perform surgery with it. The air cracked once, a supersonic wave stifled only by the earplugs blocking Pearson's eardrums. But this one was different, a lower-pitched, dull thud. Still, the shot landed exactly where it belonged. Pearson called the shot – "Hit; right in the apricot!" – before releasing the scope, looking to his left, and noticing Raven's rifle, still in its case. Raven cleared her handgun, a recoil-compensated, blued steel Kimber Eclipse in 10mm, with 2x magnification mini-scope. Effective range: seventy meters.

"Come on, Pearson, a hundred times? I'm not that *predictable."*

The Eagle Eye is the consummate master of reconnaissance and long-distance shots, a brilliant scout and sniper able to detect – and defeat – a foe further away than most people can see. (Example: Vassili Zaitsev, *Enemy at the Gates*; Katniss Everdeen, *The Hunger Games*; Allan Quatermain, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*)

Core Abilities

- **One shot, one kill:** If you have a moment to aim at a target, the target doesn't last long. When making a single-target precision shot (not using the effects of the Autofire, Spreading, or Radius tags – whether your weapon has them or not) with a firearm or bow from a stationary position (i.e. you don't move during your turn):
    - You receive +1 to your attack rolls.
    - You can target enemies at a range one category higher than your weapon's range, but you suffer disadvantage (-2) to the attack (e.g. with a Short range weapon, you can make attacks at Long range at disadvantage (-2).)
    - You ignore the first -2 in disadvantage penalties from attempting to target a weak point.
- **All-seeing eye:** Your powers of perception are unparalleled. This gives you two benefits:
    - +2 to rolls related to noticing and interpreting visual or audio clues – spotting, listening, and tracking.
    - When you succeed at a noticing task, you gain more, and more detailed, information than others.

Evolution Options
Choose either *One shot, one kill* or *All-seeing eye*.

Boosts

- **Scout**: +1 to rolls related to noticing and interpreting visual or audio clues – spotting, listening, and tracking.
- **Piercing sight:** Ignore all disadvantage penalties to attacks and other rolls due to darkness or concealment.
- **Aim small, miss small:** You get serious advantage (+4) instead of advantage (+2) when you spend one turn aiming.
- **Close combat shooter:** You can fire a ranged weapon at someone engaging you at CQC range, or at someone else with an enemy engaging you at CQC range, at no penalty.
- **Be the bullet:** Ignore the first -2 in disadvantage penalties from attacking targets that are in cover or moving rapidly.

Playing an Eagle Eye

The Eagle Eye's primary role in combat is as a scout and marksman. This can take the form of a dedicated, very long range sniper, or a fighter whose role is to take out point targets precisely at range while still being embedded in a unit and participating in its movements. The Eagle eye dominates with a rifle. Heavy armor makes her more resilient, but the penalty to **Speed** that comes with it may make it harder for her to stay stealthy and mobile.

In any situation, the Eagle Eye must be sure to use her unparalleled ability as a scout to assist her teammates and keep everyone aware of the situation in the field at all times; being detached from her unit may help her stay concealed, but failing to keep coordinated with them may leave them blind to potentially serious threats they may not otherwise be able to detect until it's too late. She may also be at risk if she is detected and engaged alone.

The Eagle Eye's most important stat is **Perception**, since her main role is scouting and extreme range shooting. **Speed** is helpful in maintaining the Eagle Eye's stealth and the element of surprise, as well as improving her defense. **Aptitude** allows the Eagle Eye to better interpret any recon she may send back to her squad as a detached scout, or to better make use of traps, mines, and explosives, making it useful as a tertiary stat.

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The Shadow

Lynx peered through the viewer of her fiberscope, observing the six Fist troops arranging a search pattern. "Spread out, find her!" The lead man – a lieutenant, probably, though it was hard to tell at the device's low resolution – barked orders to his goons. "Campbell, Knight, left. Reese, Kitridge, right. Jenkins, you're with me. Move!" The last words were a dull roar in Lynx's ears, not because the lieutenant was being especially quiet, but because Lynx was already gone, racing through the vents without a sound.

Lt. Kelly pointed at the door and raised his Glock. Somehow, he knew she was on the other side. Jenkins wired the door with a line of detcord and stood aside. Kelly outstretched three fingers, then two, then one. The door exploded into shrapnel, scattering through the room. Jenkins moved in, Kelly close behind. Nothing. Calls came from the other rooms. "Clear right!" "Clear left!" Kelly cursed. "Where is she?" "Uh, sir?" Jenkins was crouched low, examining a device – Lynx's fiberscope. "Dammit! I knew she was just here! What the hell?" He felt a tap on his shoulder from behind.

"Hi!" Lynx cheerfully smiled and waved from the doorframe, before thrusting a knife into Kelly's throat and casting a second with her other hand into Jenkins' forehead. "I'll have that back, thanks." She retrieved her fiberscope from Jenkins' grip, before stuffing the bodies into the ventilation shaft and continuing on her way.

The Shadow is an undetectable, fleeting specter. For those who manage to detect her, pain soon follows. (Example: Scarlett and Snake Eyes, *G.I. Joe;* Catwoman, *Batman*)

Core Abilities

- **Unbound by physics:** You are a master acrobat, able to navigate the most perilous terrain without pause. This gives you two benefits:
    - +2 to rolls related to acrobatic maneuvers, like jumps, tumbles, and balance.
    - Your acrobatic maneuvers defy physics and gravity, to a point. You can cling to walls, wall-jump and wall-run, swing like an Olympic athlete, and more.
- **Ghost:** You skirt the edge of perception. This gives you two benefits:
    - You gain +2 to rolls related to sneaking or hiding from notice.
    - When you successfully complete a task related to athletics or acrobatics, you make no noise at all.

Evolution Options
Choose either *Unbound by physics* or *Ghost*.

Boosts

- **Sneak**: +1 to rolls related to sneaking or hiding from notice.
- **Acrobat:** +1 to rolls related to acrobatic maneuvers, like jumps, tumbles, and balance. Also, you get +2 to Resistance rolls to absorb damage from falling.
- **Assassin:** When attacking an enemy, and you have advantage to your attack roll or your target has disadvantage to their defense roll, the attack is more potent, you deal 50% extra damage on any hit (or increase the potency of any special effects).
- **Fast hands:** You can *quickly* attempt to pick a lock, palm an object, pick a pocket, or perform other sleight-of-hand thievery, and gain +1 to related rolls.
- **Technophile:** You start each mission with 3 free Gadgets instead of just one.

Playing a Shadow

The Shadow is, before anything else, the ideal infiltrator. Her first and most valuable line of defense is stealth. She stays out of trouble by staying in the shadows or out of sight, aided substantially by using acrobatics to be where the enemies least expect. When the fight happens around her, she uses subtlety to line up carefully calculated strikes. The Shadow doesn't have to be too selective when it comes to weaponry; as long as it's silent (or suppressed), it suits her well. She should choose weapons that best suit her ideal style of combat, while largely avoiding weapons that make a lot of noise or a big mess (except maybe as a diversion!). Suppressors are crucial if she uses firearms. She should also make sure to grab a few gadgets to help her out: goggles, fiberscopes, glass cutters, and especially grapple guns are all useful. (*Technophile* allows her to add to that list.) The Shadow lives by her ability to get where she needs to be, get the job done, and get out, quickly. If caught in a stand-up fight, she is at her best when supported by allies who can draw the enemy's attention. If she can slink from cover to cover, or attack the enemy from a flank, she can use the *Assassin* Boost to punish her foes.

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The Shadow's stealth and acrobatic skills are her defining quality. Therefore, **Speed** is without question her most important stat. It also comes in handy when she gets into close quarters wielding light CQC weapons like swords and knives. If she intends on using ranged attacks with non-throwing weapons to any extent, **Perception** is also valuable. She may press **Aptitude** into service if she finds herself working with security systems, computers, or explosives; or if she finds herself needing to fast-talk her way into an area and has no backup from a Smooth Operator, or lacks a helpful boost like *Duplicitous*.

Acrobatics

The Shadow's acrobatic skills are very much larger than life. She's the kind of person who can bounce from wall to wall, climb anything with her bare hands, run at full speed on a telephone wire, and dash across (rather than through) a crowd by using their shoulders as platforms. If as a Shadow you want to get somewhere unusual, ask; if it isn't already present in the scene, the GM will present you a route filled with improbable feats of skill, and break it down as a complex task. (You can always help him define one if you'd like to express your Shadow's own style, but the GM has final say on the steps involved.) One way or another, if it's even remotely feasible for you to get somewhere, you can attempt to do so.

Example

Lynx the Shadow is standing at the top of a twenty-story office building that the Crimson Fist is using as a front for running the logistics of their criminal enterprise. She needs to get to the overlook on the tenth floor, but she's been cornered by one of the Fist's assault squads, who peer down their subcarbine sights at her. "*Get on the ground!*" comes the first shout. She slowly backs to the edge of the building, but not wanting to fall sixty meters to her death, nor wanting to yield, her player says to the GM, "I want to climb down the building." The GM replies, "Well, you're certainly not going to do it *carefully*, unless you want to eat three magazines worth of rifle fire. What're you packing?" "I have a rope!" The GM knows she won't have a chance to set up a line to rappel, but there's always a way.

"Okay, so here's how this works," the GM begins. "You look over your shoulder and see a flagpole. You can jump, tie a loop in your rope as you fall, and try to hook it around the flagpole; then, running along the wall…" Lynx's player jumps in. "I can slide down the outcropping glass slope above the overlook you mentioned earlier, and catch the edge before I fall." "Hell yes. Of course, then there's the matter of getting through the window. Let's do this." Lynx's player chuckles, remembering what the mook said earlier: "Get on the ground!" "'Hey,'" she and Lynx finally reply, with a smirk. "'You never said which ground.' I jump."

The GM gets to work: "It's not going to be easy to tie that knot and make the throw in time – you're looking at **SP** vs. 10." Naturally, this is *overcoming an obstacle*, with the obvious potential complication that Lynx will need to recover from a fall before she hits the ground. Since she's performing a stunt, she gets +2 from her *Unbound by physics* ability, plus 2 for her **Speed** stat, and one more still from her *Acrobat* boost, mean she's rolling at a crazy +5. Her roll comes up 9, for a total of 14, a strong hit! The GM chooses *you get advantage forward*. "You've tied more than your fair share of knots, so this is no problem. You're still well above that flagpole, which will make the wall-run that much easier. Still tricky, but could be a lot worse, so, let's call that **SP** vs. 9, and don't forget you have advantage from the strong hit." She's rolling at an absurd +7!

Sadly, her next roll is a 1; she misses regardless, but the total is an 8, just shy. Lynx's player winces – "Oh, no, am I dead?" To just tell her she falls and hits the ground without a chance to save herself would be overly harsh, and she missed the roll, but it wasn't a strong miss. Still, though, the GM chooses *you suffer an injury*: "Not quite, relax. You make the wall run, but the rope catches you at the last second and instead of a graceful slide, you fall hard on your chest – it's not pleasant, but you've had your share of falls before, too, and your *Acrobat* boost reduces the Power of the impact from 6 to 4." "Good," Lynx's player replies, "because I only brought concealable armor." She has a 0 in Strength, giving her a Resistance of just 8; but her concealable armor gives her 1 Armor Rating (see **Armor** under **Gearing Up**, later), so she marks down 3 damage. Less than ideal, but manageable.

"Last thing, you're sliding fast, and you're not in a very good position, but you need to catch yourself and make your way into the window at the bottom of that glass slope; we're going to call that **SP** vs. 7." "Bleh, okay." Her last roll is another 5, for a total of 10. "Awesome!" Lynx's player sighs in relief. The GM concludes: "You hear the fireteam on the roof firing rounds ineffectively in the distance as you snag the ledge with your left hand and flip down into the window in a graceful crouch." "Perfect. They know exactly where I am, though; time to get out of sight. Any vents around?"

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The Wheelman

The Bugatti Veyron roared, threatening revolt as it pushed a full twenty miles per hour past its factory maximum speed over the ridge before bouncing onto the access road alongside the tracks. Darius leaned even harder on the accelerator pedal, juking left and right as he evaded the heavy oil drums being thrown out of the maglev cargo train. Katar Heavy Transport*, it read, a thin veil for a Crimson Fist front business.* It's worth ten bills a shot to try to take me out, huh? *Darius sprayed back with his MAC-10 machine pistol, barrel spitting fire and .45-caliber steel core rounds, to convince the barrel-throwing goon to get down. He glanced at the satchel of C4 in his passenger seat, covered in duct tape. He'd have one chance, probably, before the whole train full of troops opened up on him. Slowly, he gained ground, before he saw it: the linkage connecting the passenger car to the rest of the train, and coming up fast on the right, a well-placed hill. An opening.*

Ambassador Kim turned his head, as if to see what was going on outside his window. Shame he was blindfolded. A pair of Katar troops, brandishing hefty, top-of-the-line KSG-12 combat shotguns, stood at the near side of the train car, waiting at low ready, in case someone managed to break in. A tall woman in an officer's uniform, clutching her own shotgun, leaned forward to whisper in his ear: "Don't panic; you'll be safe soon."

Darius jammed the accelerator and veered right, swinging the wheel back to the left just as he reached the hill; his beloved Veryon gracefully floating through the air, he stood in his seat and threw the explosive charge to the linkage now below him. With a sharp bounce, he landed to the train's left, jammed his foot on his Veyron's brake pedal, and pressed the detonator trigger. The passenger car shook loose, the rest of the train speeding on without a care. As the train car skid to a halt, its interior lit up like fireworks. Gunshots rang out, one after another. Darius took hold of his MAC-10 once more, slid a new magazine in, and dashed toward the now stationary train car; in the handful of seconds it took him to reach the door and kick it open, the action had already come to a close. He looked left and right to see two Katar soldiers, slumped in a heap against the front wall. Jenna's shotgun exhaled a thin wisp of smoke.

The Wheelman is a master of vehicles. If it can be piloted, driven, flown, or anything else, the Wheelman can handle it better, faster, harder. (Example: Michael Knight, *Knight Rider;* H. M. Murdock*, The A-Team*; Stringfellow Hawke, *Airwolf*)

Core Abilities

- **Stuntman:** You know the performance envelope of any vehicle – and just where to push it. This gives you two benefits:
    - You can perform stunts with vehicles that no one else can match; jumps, driving on tunnel ceilings, balletic loops, and more.
    - When performing a stunt in a vehicle, you gain +2 to driving-related rolls.
- **Drive anything:** You can get the feel for any vehicle. Where most people will be clueless when trying to fly or pilot an unknown vehicle, you can pick it right up. This gives you two benefits:
    - You never suffer disadvantage penalties due to unfamiliarity with a vehicle.
    - Any vehicle-related Boosts you take apply to any vehicle, not just one group.
    - Through simple observation, you can intuit performance characteristics, armament, and other data about any vehicle.
- **Sweet ride**: At the start of any mission, as part of your gear package you receive a top-of-the-line vehicle appropriate to the mission – a personally-tuned, custom version, better than anything in its class. Depending on circumstances, the vehicle may be armed with machine guns, missiles, or other mounted weapons. Examples include a sports car, van, jeep, motorcycle, fast-attack vehicle, armored car, helicopter, powerboat, and more.

Evolution Options
Take *Stuntman*, and choose either *Drive anything* or *Sweet ride*.

Boosts

- **Driver:** Choose a category of vehicle, from Passenger/Light Truck, Heavy Truck, Fighting Vehicle, Helicopter, Fixed-wing Airplane, Personal Watercraft, or Boat.* You gain +1 to rolls when driving that category of vehicle.
- **Mechanic:** Choose a category of vehicle.* You gain +1 to rolls made to repair damage or restore functionality to that type of vehicle, or to tune that vehicle for greater performance.
- **Scrapmaker:** You gain +1 to rolls made to attack vehicles, and your attacks against vehicles gain +2 Power.
- **Turned in:** While you drive a vehicle, you and allies riding in that vehicle (but not the vehicle itself) gain +1 armor against attacks made by enemies outside of the vehicle.
- **One hand on the wheel:** You can easily drive and do something else simultaneously without penalty.

* If you have the *Drive Anything* ability (by being a Wheelman or Evolving), don't pick – the Boost applies to any vehicle.

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Playing a Wheelman

The Wheelman possesses an unusual dual nature compared to the other Badasses: in, or against, a vehicle, he's indomitable. When he's not in or near a vehicle, he doesn't really have an advantage. Therefore, it's in his best interest to keep tabs on his vehicle, acquire enemy vehicles, or find a vehicle whenever possible. Vehicles change the battlefield. Grabbing a forklift and driving it into a squad is a good way to make short work of them, or failing that, make one amazing distraction on which the Wheelman's allies can capitalize. Since driving is reflexive (and therefore doesn't suffer from most **Speed** penalties), heavy armor doesn't cause the Wheelman as many problems as it does most other Badasses (like the Shadow or Eagle Eye); select whatever armor suits your style better. A smart Wheelman carries a powerful one-handed ranged weapon, like a machine pistol or magnum, for use behind the wheel. His other picks are more a matter of personal preference.

The Wheelman's singular focus on driving makes **Speed** his most important stat. **Aptitude** is likely to help with any repairs or modifications a vehicle needs, particularly if there's no Sapper around, and **Perception** can be useful when attacking enemy vehicles or when fighting from a turret mount. **Strength** can be valuable for the inevitable times his vehicle takes a tumble, but is generally less useful to him than the other stats.

Stunts

In the real world, vehicles have what's called a "performance envelope" – maximum speed and acceleration, turn radius, stall speed, different gearboxes, whatever makes sense for the vehicle. A Wheelman isn't quite as restricted by his vehicle's envelope as the next driver. He knows how to tune his vehicle and his driving to such a degree that he can operate a healthy bit outside the envelope and keep perfect control of his vehicle. In a chase, or in any other circumstance the Wheelman finds an otherwise insurmountable barrier between his vehicle and his destination – or maybe just to show off a little bit – he can pull a stunt with his vehicle. These are tricks most people can't touch. As a player, don't hesitate to try absolutely wild things with your vehicle. As a GM, let the player try these things, and sometimes suggest options as a sort of gambit.

Example

Darius the Wheelman has his foot on the floor of his Bugatti Veyron, streaking down a sewer tunnel, while Ming sends pistol rounds into the specially modified combat motorcycles bearing down on them. The terrain is too tight; Darius would love to use the raw power of his engine to open up the distance, but the tunnel twists and turns, and he can't get any real acceleration without a straightaway. The tunnel ends a few hundred meters ahead, but naturally, there's a police blockade at the end of the tunnel, under the impression that the Crimson Fist's convoy of stolen masterpieces will pass by. (Little do they know that the Fist convoy is a decoy, and the pieces are actually being offloaded onto a speedboat at the dock ahead.) The cars can't move in time, and there's only a few minutes before the boat leaves and Darius misses his chance.

Darius's player turns to the GM. "There's no way I'm going to just plow through this blockade, is there?" The GM thinks for a second. "No way, and if you pop a U-turn, it'd force you to handbrake and come to a nearly dead stop in a squad of motorcycles." The bikes aren't messing around, either; the motorcycles are armed with mounted light machine guns, and the Veyron is already worse for wear. "Screw it, I drive up the walls of the tunnel and get the Veyron onto the ceiling as it leaves the tunnel, leaping over the police cars and rotating the rest of the way in mid-air, landing upright at full speed." That kind of thing is impractical and horrendously unsafe – exactly the kind of environment in which a Wheelman excels.

"Sounds good," replies the GM. Why not? This is awesome. This is *overcoming an obstacle,* plain and simple. The police cars aren't moving, so they can't directly oppose the maneuver; it's just a roll versus a Target Number. It's really hard, no question, but something the Wheelman should be able to pull off in the clutch, so the GM decides on **Speed** vs. 10. "Give me **Speed**+2 for the maneuver!" Darius throws: a 7, plus 2 for Speed, plus 2 from the Stuntman ability, for 11 total, a solid hit! The GM narrates. "It happens exactly as you called it; the tires squeak quietly as you regain purchase with the road and speed away." "Ha," Darius's player muses, "they watch the car sail over their heads, and I'm pretty sure I see a trooper's jaw hit their cruiser's dashboard." (Badass Point awards soon follow.)

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The Iron Hand

"Ming, keep me covered. The bodyguards are expendable, but we need Kiresao alive." Duke looked down over the balcony; there she was, clutching her blade, her two bodyguards standing close nearby. She was waiting for someone. That made it a perfect time to act. Duke took a knee to stay out of sight, as Ming drew his machine pistols and opened up, scattering the trio to nearby cover behind a pair of heavy pillars. Once their attention was diverted, Duke vaulted the railing in front of him and jumped down, landing with a tuck and a roll. Ming had his foes pinned down; Duke moved up, using the pillar to mask his approach.

Kiresao felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned to meet Duke's open palm face-first. He then wrested the katana from her hand, following that up with a nerve strike that sent her reeling, dizzy and unable to move. The bodyguard standing next to her moved to strike with the butt of his rifle, but before it could come down, Duke stepped to his right, letting the guard's momentum carry him past, and planted his foot in the man's back, knocking him face-first into the pillar. The last man raised his weapon to fire; Duke grabbed the dazed Kiresao, spun her around to face her bodyguard, and held her own katana to her throat.

"You might want to rethink that."

The Iron Hand is the supreme martial artist, possessing black belts in more styles than most people know exist. (Example: Scott McCoy, *The Delta Force;* Cordell Walker, *Walker, Texas Ranger;* Jackie Chan, aka "Who Am I?", *Who Am I?*)

Core Abilities

- **End the fight:** Your body is a more potent weapon than any manufactured weapon could hope to be. Your unarmed attacks have a base Power of 6 instead of 4.
- **Fist break:** Your punches, kicks, and other strikes pierce wood and concrete like custard. When attacking objects, treat their Armor Rating as half of its normal value (rounded down).
- **The Art**: You are a black-belt in more styles than most people know exist, and have a personal style all your own. This grants you the ability to inflict additional effects on targets in unarmed combat; choose one with each attack you make. Unlike typical attacks, you may choose to deal damage, or not, at your discretion regardless of the effect you choose on a successful hit. (A strong hit still provides an additional bonus.) Here are a few example effects:
    - Disarm, trip, throw, or knock down a foe
    - Disable one of an opponent's limbs for three turns
    - Stun your target for one turn
    - Disorient your target, giving them disadvantage (-2) on most rolls for a few turns or until they clear their head
    - Attack two foes without penalty (throwing one into another, or slamming their heads together)
    - Pin a foe, while retaining full freedom of movement

Evolution Options
Take either *End the fight,* or take *The Art* and *Fist break*.

Boosts

- **Black belt:** When making unarmed attacks, you gain +1 to attack rolls and +1 Power.
- **Unbreakable:** +1 to Armor Rating and +1 to endurance-related **ST** rolls (resisting poison, disease, suffocation, etc.)
- **Flow like water:** +1 to defense rolls against CQC attacks.
- **Opportunist:** +1 to attack rolls (armed or not) with an intent other than direct damage – disarm, trip, etc.
- **Zanshin:** You never suffer disadvantage penalties to defense rolls due to being flanked.

Playing an Iron Hand

Barring overwhelming odds, if the Iron Hand gets close to his opponents, the fight is already over. If his allies can help him get into range, the Iron Hand can keep several opponents occupied, largely because he's a hard force to ignore. He can use their attacks against them, and pin them down into an engagement in his preferred arena. He must mix up his techniques between calculated throws, guards, and stuns to keep the enemy guessing and off-balance. If he can pull that off successfully, he can take them out one or two at a time while his targets' allies are helpless to do anything but watch. If he can't get close, however, he's at a pretty serious disadvantage. It's always smart for an Iron Hand to bring at least one ranged weapon, so he is still a factor in a fight even if he can't get close – throwing weapons are usually preferable due to their reliance on physical stats, but guns are always an option too.

With a high **Strength** score, the Iron Hand is a behemoth; he's able to deliver punishing strikes, and can take multiple hits without flinching. With a focus on **Speed**, he isn't quite as durable, but he can dodge strikes and can get into CQC with his opponents more easily. Since an Iron Hand is going to stand at the forefront of a battle, both of these are important. **Perception** and **Aptitude** aren't of as much importance, although **Perception** is probably more useful than **Aptitude**.

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The Weapon Master

"Tenmei, you in position?" Raven looked above him, at the windsock hanging next to the flagpole in front of the motor pool, before adjusting a dial on her scope one click. And there he was, at the door, a hand at his back waiting to bring his giant, fiercely curved blade to bear.

"Go, Raven." Tenmei waited, as Raven dialed in a shot. The air cracked, and the machine gunner fell silent. Tenmei broke into a dead sprint, opposed by just a handful of guards, a skeleton crew. In one stroke each fell, before ultimately Tenmei stood face-to-face with his opponent – an ASU-57 field artillery piece. With no machine gunner, the crew had to improvise. Tenmei watched calmly as the twin 57mm barrels traversed down, aligning with his body.

"Tenmei, do you have a death wish or something? Move!"

"Patience, Raven." Ironic to have to extol to a sniper the virtues of patience, *Tenmei thought to himself in an instant. Then the barrels fired, then nothing. Raven was transfixed; the man had barely moved, and yet he was unharmed.*

Behind him, Tenmei heard four half-shells slam into the wall behind him with no effect. A single spinning jump, and in a second fluid motion, both barrels clanked to the ground. Then he raised the sword high, point down, before plunging it to the hilt into the ASU's diesel engine, spraying fuel in every direction. At last, the driver hatch popped open, and a figure reached up to climb out, before freezing in place as he found Tenmei's nodachi blade pointed at his throat. "Yield."

The Weapon Master is an expert in close combat, bringing archaic and modern arms to bear in a melee. (Example: Goemon Ishikawa XIII, *Lupin the 3rd*; Richard B. Riddick, *Pitch Black*)

Core Abilities

A tool for every situation: You can expertly press a close-combat weapon's every advantage. This grants you special benefits to your attacks and defenses in close combat based on the type of weapon you're wielding:

Blades (e.g. swords, knives)
- Your attacks ignore the Armor Rating of the target.
- Once per turn, you can choose to interrupt an action in progress by an enemy within your CQC reach with an attack using the blade, even if you haven't declared an overwatch action. If you do, you cannot take a primary action on your next turn (though you can still move and take incidental actions).

Bludgeons (e.g. hammers, axes)
- Attacks gain +1 Power, and you knock human-sized or smaller enemies down or away on any successful hit.
- +2 to rolls made to break or destroy objects or vehicles; attacks made to do so ignore half the target's Armor Rating.

Polearms (e.g. spears, staves)
- +1 to defense rolls against CQC attacks.
- Enemies within your CQC range cannot gain advantage to their attacks from flanking you.
- +2 to attack rolls intended to keep an opponent at a distance or block their movement.

Evolution Options

Choose a weapon category (one of blades, bludgeons, or polearms) -- you gain the benefits from *A tool for every situation* when wielding weapons of that type.

Boosts

- **Hack and slash:** +1 to attack rolls with CQC weapons.
- **Dodge bullets:** +1 to defense rolls against all ranged attacks.
- **Archer:** +1 to attack rolls using a bow or crossbow.
- **Art of impalement:** When using thrown weapons other than grenades with **Speed**, you gain +1 to attack rolls. With **Strength**, you gain +1 to the attack's Power instead.
- **Guardian:** If an ally within a couple of meters of you is the target of an attack *that does not also target you*, you can intercept the blow without using your action or requiring overwatch. You become the attack's sole target for all intents. Regardless of the result of your defense roll, your ally is unharmed.

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Playing a Weapon Master

The Weapon Master carries a sword to a gunfight and wins. He can only win if he's close enough to bring his weapon to bear, though. Thankfully, he's pretty good at dodging attacks, but frequently he's still reliant on his allies (or the architecture, or a convenient vehicle) to get him where he needs to be. The Weapon Master is pretty good at getting the enemy's attention and keeping it – you have to take a man who can cut a tank in half seriously! – making him as useful as a support player as he is a direct striker. Therefore, he's at his best when backed up by a team that he can help, and who can help him. He's still never to be trifled with, even when caught alone.

A key part of playing a Weapon Master is switching weapons when the situation demands. A sword is fantastic when dealing with foes in heavy armor, but a hammer or axe is far more useful for engaging an opponent one on one (particularly one with a shield), by virtue of knocking down opponents. Spears and staves are unmatched in their defensive ability when surrounded; sweeping to multiple targets, keeping them out of reach or at bay (pretty much the close-quarters version of suppressive fire!), and keeping covered if flanked. Bring a variety of weapons to suit as many situations as you can, and pay attention to when the situation at hand requires a better tool for the job.

The Weapon Master's most important stat is, by far, one of either **Speed** or **Strength**. This depends on the weapons he carries, and yields one of two fighting styles. A high-**Strength** Weapon Master packs heavy CQC weapons (like hammers, axes, or spears), and he's also very hardy, by virtue of his Resistance modifier. A high-**Speed** Weapon Master carries light CQC weapons (swords, knives, staves); these don't do as much damage, but having a high **Speed** makes close combat more feasible by virtue of making the Weapon Master harder to hit, and better able to keep enemies pinned down. Weapon Masters with a spare Boost might consider picking up *Akimbo*, allowing them to deliver exceptional amounts of punishment with two swords, axes, knives, or otherwise. **Perception** occasionally comes in handy if the Weapon Master finds him unable to close the distance; packing a gun or a bow is never a bad idea. Throwing weapons have the advantage of relying on physical stats, so they're another good option.

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The Field Medic

"Dammit, Ramirez, this is what, the fourth time?" Talia reached to her kit and pulled out her forceps. "I swear to you, if I have to pull one more bullet out of your gut…"

Ramirez grunted. "Didn't they teach you about bedside manner in med school?"

"Yeah, but I save it for the people who deserve it." A prolonged burst of machine gun fire sailed over their heads, as Bishop moved up to take cover against the bombed-out shell of an APC ahead of them.

"I don't see you jumping in to take rounds for civilians!"

"Of course not! If I did, who would be here to patch your sorry ass up?" She reached in and pulled out a bandage and a syringe. The quick-clot infused bandage made Ramirez hiss in brief pain. The stuff worked, but it wasn't pleasant. "Little pinch, now," Talia teased, as she jammed the epinephrine injector into Ramirez's thigh. He winced. Talia patted him on the shoulder. "There you go. Grab your machine gun and try not to get shot again."

"Hell, I've learned my lesson. Given a choice between bleeding out and you, I think I know what I'll choose next time!"

The field medic is a brilliant doctor and expert in physiology, able to keep a wounded squad going through the toughest times. (Example: Lifeline, *G. I. Joe*; Eugene "Doc" Roe, *Band of Brothers*)

Core Abilities

Medical genius: Your extensive medical knowledge and training gives you the ability to perform surgery, first aid, and pharmaceutical synthesis. You begin each mission with a backpack-sized medical kit containing a stock of various medications, bandages, tools, and other chemicals. As long as you have access to your medical kit (or equivalent tools), you have access to the following abilities:

- *Quick heal*: Patch someone up using first aid in one turn.
- *Field surgery*: You can undertake a complex task to provide the appropriate medical care to a wounded ally. Success at this complex task removes the condition and restores one Health point. (The Medic cannot perform Field Surgery on herself.)
- *Pharmaceutical infusion*: Synthesize a compound that can produce beneficial effects.
    - Recovery: Remove a temporary condition affecting a character, like poison or disease, or allow the character to temporarily ignore injury conditions.
    - Booster: Apply a positive condition, like *Adrenaline shot* or *Pestilence virus immunization*, which provides advantage to certain rolls for the duration of a scene.
- *Toxic infusion*: Synthesize a compound that can produce insidious effects on a target. This dose of a toxin can be applied to a weapon, injected, or otherwise delivered to do harm to a target. The target may roll **ST** to resist a poison. Toxins can be applied to ammunition like arrows or darts, but bullets carry too small of a dose to be effective.
    - Poison: Apply a negative condition, like *Searing pain* or *Truth serum*, which applies disadvantage to relevant rolls for the duration of a scene or two.
    - Knockout: Remove one Health point; if the target has none left, they're knocked out for a while.
    - Lethal: Remove one Health point; if the target has none left, they're either dying or dead.

Evolution Options

Take *Medical genius*; you can use either *Quick heal* and *Field surgery*, or *Pharmaceutical infusion* and *Toxic infusion*.

Boosts

- **First responder**: +1 to first aid rolls, *and if you have the Field Surgery ability,* field surgery rolls.
- **Chemist**: +1 to rolls related to chemistry and biology, including the application and neutralization of poison or disease. Also, you recognize any chemical agent on sight, and recognize the effects of a disease at a glance.
- **Keep your head down:** +1 to defense rolls, as long as you haven't attacked an enemy during or since your previous turn.
- **Forensic tech:** +1 to rolls to perform forensic analysis on a body or scene; when you succeed on a forensics task, you also receive more detailed information.
- **Who's Hippocrates?**: You begin each mission with a few doses of a toxin of your choice. Subjects suffer disadvantage (-2) to attempts to resist these; *if you have the Toxic infusion* ability, subjects also suffer disadvantage to resist any other toxins you synthesize.

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Playing a Field Medic

The Field Medic is good on her own, but to the teams she supports, she's an invaluable resource. Her Quick Heal ability is a lifesaver in a tough fight, when one or more allies drop, to get them back up and moving on the quick. Therefore, the Medic is a crucial member of the team, and she needs to be defended, or know how to defend herself, but not be so far out of the action that she can't rush to an ally's side when she's needed. Her weapons and armor are a matter of personal preference, but she may want to take choices that keep a low profile; suppressors aren't a bad Gadget pick. Since the Field Medic's abilities don't rely much on **Speed**, heavy armor can help keep her conscious if she gets hit. It's important to keep an eye on your team's Hits; *Quick heal* will keep your allies out of trouble before they miss a Resistance roll and get seriously injured.

The Medic's most important stat is **Aptitude**, as it drives most of her medical abilities. First Aid is governed by **Perception**, so that would come second; it also gives the Medic some capability in a fight. If her team is careful, the Medic should be well protected from most sources of danger, but the Field Medic's physical stats will come in handy should problems arise. *The Medic can't do surgery on herself*, so staying conscious is of paramount importance!

Field Surgery in Practice

As mentioned before, Field Surgery is just another complex task, and it works like any other, but what makes it different from some of the other Badass special skills is that its goal is always the same: restore one lost Health point. How you get there depends heavily on what injury the subject has suffered. This follows from how they described their wound when they suffered it. It's structured as a normal complex task. If the Medic misses a roll, she may need to try a different approach, require materials she doesn't have to hand (necessitating a scene to find them on the mission site), or will have to accept only being able to do a rough job. With complications, the patient may be unstable, or need to be moved to another, safer location.

When determining the steps in a medical procedure, if the GM or the Medic's player has some medical knowledge, by all means use it to flavor description. Failing that, don't expect the player to be an encyclopedia. Just describe it at a high level and concentrate on the fun bits. Not all parts of an action story have to get into the gritty details.

Example

Darius just got out of a scrape involving a battle against pursuers riding machine gun-equipped ATVs, and took a nasty spill off of his motorcycle and fractured his leg. Talia finds a spare room in an Yggdrasil safehouse and examines the wound. She and the GM discuss. "So I can't imagine he's going to be perfectly healed and ready to go if I just set his leg, right?"

"You kidding?" The GM responds. "You're a wizard. He may not be able to walk without a limp for a while, but you can set it, no problem. It's an incomplete fracture, so you're in luck. You'll need to anesthetize the area, do a quick reduction of the fracture to set it, and wrap it so it will hold together. It won't be able to hold his entire weight, but he should be able to handle himself all right."

"Yeah," Talia's player replies, catching the drift, "that's what this proprietary bone mesh injection is for." It's not really practical in modern medicine to set a bone in a way that allows it to immediately be used again, but for a Badass Field Medic, it's doable. Besides, this is an action story. It'd suck if Darius had to sit around in a bedroom or use crutches for a month before he could get back into play.

"All right, let's do this." The GM describes the first step. "The anesthesia is going to be **AP** vs. 7." This is *overcoming an obstacle,* unsurprisingly. Talia has an **Aptitude** of +2, and her *First responder* boost gives her +1 more; she rolls a 6, for a total of 9. "Solid, you numb the area, no problem. Next, you'll need to reduce the bone."

Reduction of a fracture is a procedure intended to set a bone so it can grow back together without requiring actual surgery, so it's a little simpler than cutting Darius's leg open, a fact he's probably pretty accepting of. "We'll call it **AP** vs. 9." This time, the roll is a little short; a 4, with the +3 from before, for 7. "Ah, dammit," Talia responds; the GM chooses *you require more resources*: "Not good," the GM explains. "It's a little bit worse than you thought, and you'll need another injection of bone mesh; at this point, you're pretty much out of it, so you might be in trouble if you miss another roll." "Ugh, okay. No one said this was easy."

"Last step – the wrap, **AP** vs. 7, again. Just trying to keep it from moving." Her final roll is much better – a natural 10, for 12, a strong hit! "Sweet!" Talia's player exclaims. The GM chooses *your work is superb* and concludes: "You wrap it really well; it stings a bit, but Darius should be able to walk pretty normally without much trouble." The GM was considering leaving Darius with a *setting bone mesh* condition for a scene or two, but with a roll like that, such a penalty is now completely off the table.

"Okay!" Talia's player turns to Darius, and turns on the charm as usual. "There there, now, all better," she chides, her tongue dripping with vitriol. "Stay in your lane next time, okay?"

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The Sapper

"Leon, they're coming, any minute now!" Aleph prodded furiously at her homebrew forearm console.

"Aleph, can you go any faster?" Leon unrolled a long spool of thin wire.

"No, can you?"

"We'll see." He tied one end to a support beam, the other to a pin inside a metal box, perforated with holes in one direction. He reached to a nearby shelf for a bottle of some strange chemical that even Aleph hadn't heard of before, and she'd spent enough time trolling Wikipedia to be an encyclopedia herself. She opened a new window and played at the keys. Figures moved through the shadows in the view on screen, in unison, submachine guns at low ready. Aleph shared the bad news. "Camera 12, fifty meters away. We're out of time, Leon."

"So are they. Take cover, goggle up." Nearby, a fire axe waited in its wall alcove. Leon grabbed it and severed the power conduit beside it; the room fell into darkness. Leon slid down his infrared goggles. Aleph pressed a final button, and the blast door behind them started to slide open – moving way too slowly. Voices outside the room spoke in a tense whisper. "Stack up. Flash and clear. Go!" The door was barred; a few seconds, then three blasts from a shotgun, as each hinge cracked in succession. The doorframe split, and the lead man kicked the door into the room.

As the door fell on the tripwire and pulled it taut, the wire pulled the pin from the box, which exploded in a shower of white-hot molten fragments, peppering the pointman with burning shrapnel. He collapsed and writhed in agony, as the second man barked orders. "Fall back, fall back! They've got the place trapped!" Leon dashed forward and rolled under the slowly opening blast door, with Aleph not far behind.

The sapper is a genius in the field, able to hastily construct (or deconstruct) machines in the thick of battle from spare parts. (Examples: Angus MacGyver, *MacGyver*; B.A. Baracus, *The A-Team*; Dominic Santini, *Airwolf*)

Core Abilities

Improvised engineering: You begin each mission with a backpack-sized mélange of various tools, raw materials, duct tape, chewing gum, and pieces of junk, with which you can make quick, mind-bending modifications to machines or vehicles, or even build surprising devices from spare parts!

- *Improvised construction:* You can hack traps, tools, weapons, or even vehicles together from spare parts and scrap at hand. Building a machine is a complex task; the Target Numbers of the rolls you'll need to make depend on the extent of the modification and the nature of any parts or materiel you must provide yourself.
- *Jerry-rig*: In the space of a turn or two, you can quickly (but temporarily) repair broken components of an object or vehicle. This is usually a single **Aptitude** task; on a hit, you either clear the device's Hits (like first aid), or temporarily restore functionality (but not the Health point lost) to a component that was destroyed.
- *More power!*: By making a quick modification to a machine or vehicle (adding nitrous oxide to a fuel tank, increasing the pressure of a firing chamber, etc.) you can temporarily improve its characteristics.
- *Single point of failure*: All machines have weak points – a battery to pull, a fuel tank to puncture, a critical mechanical linkage. Once you study the machine and find out what to pull, you can attempt a physical task to remove or disable the weak part; success disables a component (and automatically removes one Health point) from an object or vehicle.

Evolution Options

Take *Improvised engineering;* choose either *Improvised construction* and *Jerry-rig*, or *Single point of failure* and *More power!*

Boosts

- **Builder**: +1 to rolls related to constructing, maintaining, or repairing a physical system.
- **Electrician**: +1 to rolls related to interfacing, modifying, or disabling electronics.
- **Saboteur**: +1 to rolls related to demolition and sabotage of materiel, including attacking and planting explosives on vehicles and structures, as well as locating weak points. You also get +1 to rolls made to disarm bombs and other explosives.
- **Improv combatant**: Improvised weapons and gear you use don't tend to break easily, and you gain +1 to rolls using improvised gear. *If you are a Sapper*, this includes devices you constructed using your Improvised Construction ability, whether you're there to physically make attacks with them or not.
- **I've got just the thing:** You don't have to select all of your Gadgets at the start of a mission. If you reserve Gear Points at the start of a mission, you may use them at any time to retroactively purchase a Gadget. This ability does *not* work if you've been frisked or otherwise relieved of weapons and equipment.

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Playing a Sapper

The Sapper is a curious case – he doesn't have a clearly defined role the way most Archetypes do. He's in the business of creating solutions where none exist. This means things as diverse as knocking down obstacles, building machines to climb walls, setting all manner of devious traps, and generally coming up with unconventional, almost mad-science ways to solve any problem in front of him. Given time and opportunity, the Sapper can take control of a situation or a battlefield, and with a spark of ingenuity, regain control if his team is on the defensive. Like the Field Medic, his weapons and armor are a matter of preference; he's usually best served keeping a wide variety of Gadgets on hand (and with *I've got just the thing*, he can pull out whatever he needs at the right time) and using them in unexpected places.

The Sapper's most important stat is **Aptitude**, followed by **Perception** to notice potential components, as well as flaws in existing systems. His physical stats are less useful; they're handy if he gets pinned down, but in general, he should try to stay clear of a fight, preferring to control the battlefield rather than be part of it.

Improvised Construction in Practice

The Sapper is an expert in manipulating physical systems, whether electronic or mechanical. If an object needs to be repaired, or introduced to a state of disrepair, he's there. But his most valuable asset is creativity. By interfacing systems that don't necessarily belong together, he can create devices, traps, vehicles, structures, or just about anything else from spare parts at hand. The best way to approach a problem is to think of the solution first and work backward; if the Sapper can figure out what he wants to do, he can usually figure out a way to do it. Taking apart a pair of thermal goggles and a telescopic sight, for example, could produce the thermal sight he needs. A water tank, a large amount of heat or pressure, and a strategic way of punching a hole in it, can produce a powerful trap. His main weapon, therefore, is creativity. Don't be afraid to try something crazy! A Sapper may want to take weapons that are useful if he can't build anything; however, he could easily take gear picks and hack them into more complex devices or traps.

Example

Leon the Sapper wants to construct a zipline between two grain silos in the farmstead he and his team are defending, since it'd help him and Raven, the Eagle Eye, move around the rooftops to get a better view of the area, giving Darius, the Wheelman, targets to engage with the kludged-together war wagon (an old horse carrier) with attached bomb launcher they built in the garage. Of course, ziplines aren't normally built between silos, so he has to improvise something. His player describes his desires to the GM. "Okay," the GM replies, "roll **Perception** to see if you can find any material to work with – it's tricky, since you've already used most of the spare parts in the garage, so call it **PC** vs. 7." It's a little counter-intuitive, but this counts as *gathering information*, since Leon's finding out what parts he has to work with. Leon's player rolls 7, plus his **Perception** stat of +1, for a total of 8. "So you take a look in the garage to see if there's anything worthwhile. You do manage to find a good, sturdy length of rope, about 200 feet, and a couple of pulleys. That's a start, but you'll need some rods for the handle and the mounts, which you probably have in your kit, and a crank for movement, since the silos are all level."

Leon thinks – having to manually crank to move would take too much time, and puts Raven at risk if the enemy has a sniper. His player asks, "Did I find like a small-engine motor or something in there?" "No, sadly; the garage is pretty threadbare. I mean, if you'd gotten a strong hit – " Leon's player interrupts: "Wait, what if I spent a Badass Point on that last roll?" "Sure," the GM replies, "do it. You have your motor." The player marks off a Badass Point, and the GM continues. "All right, so you'll need to assemble the motor to the pulley system to move between silos, and the housing on each silo. That, and you'll have to connect the rope." The GM thinks: each housing is pretty simple, **AP** vs. 6, while integrating the motor is a fair bit more complicated, requiring **AP** vs. 9. Stringing the rope is another matter and is more of a physical thing. Neither he nor Raven is particularly strong, so he turns to Darius. "Hey, think you can toss this rope across?" Darius's player looks to the GM, who shrugs as if to say *I doubt it*. "I dunno, man," Darius replies. "Maybe if we weight it?" That makes a lot more sense, and the GM nods in approval.

Leon sets to work. "This two-cycle ought to do the job…" He makes the roll for assembling the motor – alas, he rolls a 3, plus his **Aptitude** of +3, plus 1 for *Builder*, for a total of 7, just short. The GM chooses *you need something you don't have*. "Ouch. You'd know the drive shaft in that motor is bent just so, seizing the motor when it tries to spin. You'll have to scavenge a new one, and you've pretty much gotten all you can out of this garage." The player grumbles a bit, realizing that time is a luxury he's swiftly running out of, so he spends a second Badass Point. "It just *looks* seized," Leon's player explains, "but a bit of heat and a gentle tap with a hammer, like so, and…" "Cool," the GM replies. "You get it straight enough to function again. Now onto the mounts…"

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T3h 1337 h4x0r

"Yes!" Aleph-Null pumped her fist. "Gotcha!" A shadow appeared behind Aleph, and she turned to recognize her. Jenna looked down at Aleph's laptop. Jenna knew her way around computers; she was good, but she wasn't 1337. She was curious. Maybe Aleph would indulge her.

"What'd you use?" Jenna inquired. "Rainbow tables?" "Nope." "Social engineering?" "Nope, that's your job. You've got the curves here, not me." "Ha." Fair point, though*, Jenna admitted to herself. Aleph wasn't bad looking, but she was a hundred pounds soaking wet, in a thick hoodie.*

Jenna continued. "Okay, were they using weak encryption?" "Nope." "Backdoor?" "Pervert." Jenna knew a lot of ways to crack a computer, but she didn't quite have the natural talent Aleph had. Aleph was the guru, and it never hurt to learn from the best. "Okay, smartass, how'd you do it?"

"In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities. But in the expert's, there are few." Aleph had an annoying habit of speaking in riddles when she was feeling cocky.

Jenna plied. "Meaning…"

"The password was 'admin'*."*

The 1337 h4x0r uses electronic and communication systems to play havoc with the enemy's infrastructure and use their own assets against them. (Benji Dunn, *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*; Lyle, *The Italian Job;* Chloe O'Brian, *24*)

Core Abilities

- **B4d455 R1g**: You ride the bleeding edge of technology. The B4d455 R1g is your personal, handcrafted computer device, a top-of-the-line (or even prototype) armored laptop, high-grade tablet or mobile phone, or something else. It is equipped with your own custom software to decrypt all known security systems; and comes with cellular, satellite, and conventional telephone modems, and cables and ports able to tap into nearly any piece of hardware in existence – databases, security networks, onboard control computers for vehicles – for either reconnaissance or sabotage.
- **RTFM:** You pride yourself on an exhaustive knowledge of systems architecture and operating systems.
    - You can hack anything, even systems you haven't encountered before.
    - You complete computer-related tasks much faster than others.

Evolution Options

Take either *B4d455 R1g* or *RTFM*. If you have *B4d455 R1g* and not *RTFM*, you can still remote hack a variety of devices, but it takes time and research to be able to do it – finding schematics, encryption keys, etc. With *RTFM* but not *B4d455 R1g*, you can hack anything you find easily, but you must find an interface or console to do so.

Boosts

- **Grey hat:** +1 to rolls made to hack into cyber security; you also recognize the work of other hackers on sight.
- **Search-fu:** +1 to rolls made to obtain intelligence or research data; the data you gain is precise and easily applied.
- **Remote procedure call:** +1 to rolls made to remotely command or alter programming of a device. *If you are a 1337 h4x0r*, you also get +1 to attacks and defenses you make on behalf of an enemy vehicle or weapons system under your control.
- **Firewall:** If an opposing hacker attempts to shut you out of a system or attack systems you own or control (*including the B4d455 R1g* if you have that ability), you get +1 to rolls made to defend against the attack.
- **Enigma:** You can instantly understand and break codes and encryption (electronic or otherwise) on a successful roll; you gain +1 to rolls made to do so.

Playing a 1337 h4x0r

The 1337 h4x0r has two important roles in the field. The more obvious one is intelligence; by tapping into secret networks, the h4x0r can pick up information to coordinate with the Eagle Eye's reconnaissance, and assist with the Tactical Commander's planning efforts, to establish battlefield awareness for the Badass team. Her more flashy ability, though, is to tap into any device with a network connection remotely. This includes computer systems, obviously, but also enemy battlefield awareness tools and satellite communications. These communications control devices like cameras, turrets, tanks, jet fighters… In combat, the 1334 h4x0r should see if there's a device she can take control of, and prefer using that to fighting personally. Failing that, the best thing she can do is use her equipment to end a fight quickly – whether that means eliminating the enemy, or making a speedy exit.

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The 1337 h4x0r's most valuable stat is, by far, **Aptitude**. Her other stats depend on what secondary role she intends to fill: for the purposes of sneaking into an area to interface with a device, **Speed** is useful, and if she's exposing herself to combat, **Perception** is valuable when using firearms, or for keeping herself aware of her physical surroundings.

The B4d455 Rig

The B4d455 Rig is the 1337 h4x0r's personal computer device. Generally, this is a top-of-the-line (or even prototype) armored laptop equipped with cellular, satellite, and conventional telephone modems, although the Rig could also be a high-grade tablet or mobile phone, or even a completely custom piece of hardware. (Aleph-Null's Rig is a handcrafted forearm-mounted sleeve console with a flip-up display.) The B4d455 Rig can be used for normal computing tasks, but its principal purpose is to tap into enemy or other information systems for either reconnaissance or sabotage.

Tapping into a piece of enemy hardware requires one of three access methods, depending on the targeted device's available modes of connectivity:

- A device with a wireless connection (via satellite, 802.11, Bluetooth, and similar) can be hacked remotely. Generally traffic is encrypted, so the h4x0r must crack the encryption before she can send rogue signals.
- A device with a wired connection, but no wireless, requires the h4x0r to either find an access point where the network *is* exposed to wireless traffic, or to tap directly into the network via a cable.
- A device with no connectivity at all requires the h4x0r to either splice cables into her B4d455 Rig, or just simply work with the device directly.

Once a connection is established, it's a complex task, usually with three or more subtasks, to break into the network and execute whatever rogue code is needed. The difficulty of the subtasks depend on the nature of the changes applied, and how many security measures the h4x0r needs to overcome to pull it off; each of these tasks requires a *minimum* of one combat turn, but sometimes considerably longer.

Example
Aleph-Null is pinned down by Crimson Fist soldiers. She's taking cover behind a sturdy dumpster, but the squad of submachine gun-wielding troops is bearing down on her position quickly. To make matters worse, a UCAV (unmanned combat aerial vehicle) has flitted into the area, and is laying down suppressing machine gun fire. *That thing's orders have to come from somewhere*, she realizes; *satellite or wireless communication for sure*. She's got some time and distance, but not much – it'll be a close call. Her player declares her intent to crack the thing. "Cool," the GM says. He thinks for a moment. The data is sent via encrypted link, so deciphering the encryption key is the first step, at **Aptitude** vs. 8. Then it's a matter of determining the schema of the machine's targeting parameters, **Aptitude** vs. 6. Finally, sending a modified order, **Aptitude** vs. 8.

"Ordinarily you wouldn't be able to crack the device's encryption in a single turn," the GM explains, "but you've worked with Fist vehicles before – they seem to pretty reliably lean on the AES standard. You just have to find the private key." "Sweet – here goes." This is *overcoming an obstacle,* not surprisingly. Aleph warms up her forearm console and begins typing. Her first roll: 4, plus her Aptitude of +3, plus 1 for her *Grey hat* boost, yields 8, just enough! (Her Boost squeaks her by.) The GM explains: "You're sweating, trying to figure out what's going on, when something clicks – they store their keys in a pretty consistent place on their global net, and you have a backdoor! A couple adjustments and it's no sweat to decrypt the signal. The troops swap magazines, but the UCAV keeps firing. Time's running out." "Keep firing, jerks. I keep going."

The next roll is the targeting schema. This is an attempt to *obtain information,* based on the signals she's receiving over the wire. A 9 this time, plus her Aptitude of +3 yields 12, a strong hit! "No sweat. The targeting –" Aleph's player thinks of something and jumps in: "The targeting is thermal, and the coordinates are in MGRS. I picked up that coordinate system from Bishop after I heard him keep grumbling about grid squares. The machine controls via a standard yoke, which I can simulate with the accelerometer and positioning systems in my console." "Love it," the GM responds. "Good thing, too, because you've got about one more turn. The UCAV is directly overhead, lining up for a final burst." The machine is ready for input. "All right, time to return the favor. I command the UCAV to tear into the Fist troops."

"All right, roll **Aptitude** for the order, and take +2 since you have the thing's schema locked down tight." This is the benefit of the strong hit – Aleph gets advantage (+2) to acting on the information she gleaned. Again, this is *overcoming an obstacle.* She winds up – she rolls a 6, plus **Aptitude** +3, plus 2 for her *Remote procedure call* boost, plus another 2 for advantage, makes a total of 13, another strong hit! "Wow, you're on fire!" the GM responds. "Hmm, let's see… I'm gonna say the UCAV makes a hard bank turn to sweep in on the soldiers – it's going to get a chance to fire this turn." It doesn't take long before a Hellfire missile wipes out half the squad, giving Aleph some much needed space.

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The Smooth Operator

"So, hotshot, you come here often?" Jenna opened, in well-practiced Cantonese. She didn't frequent bars much in this section of town. Yuhong's Red Lily triad spent plenty of time here, and they were hellions. Mixing with them was dangerous. The man shifted in his chair, his shirt pulling just far enough left for Jenna to catch the barest glimpse of the scorpion tattoo on the soft part of his neck. He replied, but she didn't waste much time listening to the words. It was probably some half-clever euphemism acknowledging that she'd buttoned her shirt one button too low, judging by his gaze. Nice timing, *she thought, as she slid the small white tablet she'd palmed a few seconds prior into his glass. With its specially-engineered surface, it dissolved in a few seconds.* This better work, Talia. *"See anything you like?" Jenna teasingly asked, leaning back in her chair and pretending she cared about the answer.*

The man smiled a wry, narrow smile, which, judging by his otherwise hard features, was about all the further his lips would go. She had to press the advantage for just a moment longer for the pill to finish melting into the drink, imperceptible except for its color being a single shade lighter. "Good," Jenna continued. "We have some business to attend to, right? Finish your drink and meet me outside in a few minutes." Without a word, the goon grabbed the glass and knocked it back, and he didn't have a chance to even stand up before his eyes rolled back and he slumped face-first into Jenna's chest.

"Poor guy," she couldn't help but remark. "At least he went out happy." She reached into his front shirt pocket and extracted his cell phone and a magnetic card-key before plopping him onto the table. As far as anyone knew, maybe he'd just had one too many. She patted him twice on the back, paid the tab and walked out without a word to anyone else.

He was still smiling.

The Smooth Operator is a sly con artist with the ability to turn heads, and the audacity to press that advantage. (Example: James Bond; Templeton "Faceman" Peck, *The A-Team*; Black Widow, Marvel Comics universe)

Core Abilities

- **The Look:** With a simple look, gesture, or a few words (a mental attack rolling **Aptitude** vs. **Aptitude**, which takes a single conflict turn), you can command attention and obedience from a target.
- **I've got a guy:** You have a network of allies, old friends and lovers, or various other people who *just happen* to owe you a favor. When you have downtime (an hour or three, and you're not in a conflict), roll **Aptitude** – the Target Number depends on the favor you want, the constraints required (how soon, where, etc.), who you ask, and the magnitude of the debt you already owe them. A hit means your guy can get it done for you, if you can repay that debt later. On a miss, it may not be possible, you may need to accept a lesser favor, or your guy can't do it but knows another guy who can, but might take some convincing. If you receive a favor, you have a debt to your guy in return, and that favor could get called in, possibly when you least expect it!

Evolution Options

Take *The Look* or *I've got a guy*.

Boosts

- **Trustworthy face**: +1 to rolls relating to duplicity, manipulation, and diplomacy; unless people have a reason to think otherwise, you look like someone who's reliable and easy to trust.
- **Crazy eyes:** +1 to rolls (tasks and mental attacks) when trying to intimidate someone into taking action, whether socially or physically; if you miss, the target is still at least a little bit intimidated, even if they don't end up doing what you want.
- **Always a tell**: If someone says something to you that is evasive, has a catch, or is an outright lie, the GM will tell you that you find something suspicious, and point to a verbal or non-verbal cue. It's up to you to figure out what and put that information to use.
- **Stash:** At any time, you can produce a pistol, knife, grenade, or similarly-sized weapon, even if you've been searched or completely disarmed. This doesn't work if you're restrained, or have no feasible place from which to draw the weapon. (You must have spent sufficient Gear Points on weapons to have the weapon at hand.)
- **Player:** Anyone of the appropriate sexual persuasion can't help but be at least a little bit attracted to you, regardless of circumstances. If you're able to use this as leverage, you get +1 to social rolls of any sort.

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Playing a Smooth Operator

The Smooth Operator plays a few roles; when not fighting, she's the team's most effective negotiator and con artist. She can spin a tale few people can keep up with, get what she wants – whatever that is – and be long out of sight before her victim can figure out what hit him. Often, she can get through installations without firing a shot! When she and her team get into trouble, she can use The Look to limit the enemy team's options, allowing her allies to get into position and support her. In this role, though, she's very reliant on allies, because even if one member of the enemy team is paralyzed in fear, there may be more coming! The Smooth Operator is all about playing, and defending against, mind games. **Aptitude** is her most important stat (since most of her active abilities are based on it), followed by **Perception**, since **Perception** allows her to see through duplicity and pick up on subtle nonverbal cues.

The Look

A charismatic person is a sight to behold, both literally and metaphorically. People with dashing good looks and a silver tongue have started wars, built empires, and humbled opponents many times their strength. It's all about having the right person to do the work for you, and different tactics work on different people. A female Smooth Operator may not be able to seduce a heterosexual woman, but she certainly can break out the claws! The approach the Smooth Operator uses, and the way she spins her words – or her body – will determine what effects she can accomplish.

The Smooth Operator is inherently adept at getting things from people, but she's got something special going for her in the short term: she *commands* attention. She cannot be ignored. Spending a single conflict turn giving a look, a gesture, and/or a few words, if the target is receptive, can get her target to:

- Freeze for a few seconds, ignoring everything else – longer if the Smooth Operator does something to keep the target's attention.
- Fall for some kind of misdirection; they'll look away for a few seconds, or investigate something that isn't there.
- Approach her, out of desire or interest.
- Retreat from her, reading her as a threat, whether physical or social.

These are transient effects; after the Smooth Operator breaks her gaze, or ceases talking to or otherwise manipulating the target, she has about a turn before the character goes back to normal, unless some outside influence draws his attention more than the Operator does.

If the target succeeds at his resistance roll, he'll still pick up on what the Smooth Operator is trying to communicate (in most cases); however, whether he goes along with it is up to him.

The Look vs. simple cons and intimidation

On the surface, it may seem like The Look doesn't do anything that someone can't already manage with a normal mental attack. The difference, though, is that a Smooth Operator using The Look commands her target's full attention – to the point of isolating them from the bigger picture.

Let's say there's a fight about to happen; a hero kicks in the door of a room full of mobsters, and wants them to surrender. Obviously this isn't in their best interest, since they have a vastly superior position. Typically, this requires leverage – fight, rout, or kill enough of the target's allies to convince him that the fight isn't worth pursuing, based on their own decision-making process. Without that leverage, a mental attack doesn't make sense; when the guy kicks down the door of the room, vastly outnumbered, and shouts "Surrender, put 'em down!", the rational response is to say "you're kidding, right?" and then open fire. The GM would simply disallow the attempt, as the outcome isn't in doubt – it's guaranteed to fail.

The Smooth Operator, on the other hand, kicks in that door and yells in a booming voice to the guy in charge, "Drop the weapon or I'll blow your brains out!" A success here captivates the attention of the leader, *completely*; he stops processing what's going on. All there is to him right now is him and the crazy lady with a shotgun about to put a hole in his face; his allies and superior tactical position don't even enter the picture. If the leader, now, shows signs of surrender, *that's* leverage for a follow-up, multiply-opposed mental attack against the rest of the room on her next turn. The leader's allies may find their will to fight weakened, giving the Smooth Operator an opening to force their surrender.

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Example
Let's go back to the splash text. The target Jenna's carousing with in the Triad bar is a dangerous lieutenant from the Red Lily clan, identifiable by a small tattoo of a scorpion on his neck. He's well known for getting what he wants, usually through intimidation and violence. Jenna, of course, is one step ahead of him. Spending a few minutes at the bar, casually observing his interactions and the way he looks around (a couple **Perception** rolls), she can tell he's a skirtchaser. She knows how to turn the screws in every way possible, so before she approaches the lieutenant, she makes sure to sweep her long, blonde hair into a neat ponytail, and unbutton a few buttons of her top. She knows she can keep his attention, but the guy's not stupid enough to just hand over the keys to the triad's headquarters to some busty floozy he's never met. She could certainly get her hands on the keycard if she got… *close* to him, but that's not exactly her style. (Jenna's player asks the GM: "So, if I divert his attention for a few seconds, could I snatch his wallet?" He chews on that for a second – Jenna doesn't have the *Fast hands* Boost, so that's not exactly easy for her – and replies, "I'm sure he'd like that very much, but you'd need to be somewhere private, if you catch my drift." "Yuck! I'm a con, not a hooker!")

Her player thinks for a second longer, and comes up with a plan. "I know! Talia, would you mind too much making a roll to give me like a knockout pill or something?" Talia grins menacingly and nods, "No problem." Talia's not on the scene, though. The GM interjects; "Okay, you're going for a Creative Retcon then?" "Yep!" Jenna's player replies. The GM prompts Talia for the attempt to formulate a knockout agent in a dissolving tablet, and she succeeds. Jenna spends a Badass Point for invoking Creative Retcon, and has the tablet in hand.

A few minutes later, she's gotten the lieutenant's attention and a table in the corner, and bought him a drink (151-proof rum on the rocks, with a splash of cola). She chats him up for a few minutes before going for the knockout punch. "All right, time to break out The Look. I lean forward in my seat, give him bedroom eyes, and accentuate my cleavage," her player explains. "I want him to stare for a bit so I can slip the pill in his drink." Transfixing someone completely is a really hard thing to accomplish normally – but this is exactly where The Look shines, and the fact that the guy is already vulnerable makes it that much easier.

"Nice," replies the GM. "Okay, you pretty much have him dead to rights here – you want him to do something he kind of already wants to do, but turned up to 11. Take advantage for that – roll me **Aptitude** + 2." The con, here, is a mental attack; the intent is for the lieutenant to ignore what she's about to do next, which he'd rather avoid. Jenna rolls, and nails it – an 8, plus her **Aptitude** of 2 and +2 for advantage, gives her a total of 12. The lieutenant does pretty well, rolling a 7, plus his **Aptitude** of +1 for 8, but that's still a strong hit for Jenna. "No problem," the GM explains, "and he's so busy paying attention to your chest that he doesn't even notice you move."

Jenna's player chuckles, and continues. "We have some business to attend to, right? Finish your drink and meet me outside in a few minutes." All things considered, getting him to obey this command should require another roll, but she's still got him captivated (following from both circumstances and the strong hit before); the GM deploys the benefit Jenna earned from her strong hit, namely *the attack hits harder*: "He's so transfixed that he doesn't think, and shotguns the thing." He rolls **Strength** for the lieutenant's attempt to resist the poison in the drink, and fails horribly. "As you walk to the restroom to 'freshen up', you hear a loud *thud* behind you as his head smacks the table."

Problem solved.

I've got a Guy in practice

Jenna is riding shotgun in Darius Taylor the Wheelman's custom Bugatti Veyron on a snowy mountain road in the Adirondacks, on their way to a high-society party in a mansion in the mountains for Crimson Fist financial backers, when the weather turns sour. The road is treacherous, covered in inches of snow, and rocks block the way every now and again. "This is no good," Darius says, "even with the snow tires *and* chains, we're not going to get much further. I wish we had like a helicopter or something." Jenna smiles, and replies, "Wait, I think I have a guy."

Her player turns to the GM: "What are the odds I have a contact in the weather service, like a helicopter pilot or something, who can get us a scout chopper?" The GM thinks about it for a second. "Sure, that sounds legit. He's a guy you worked with to scout hostile movements when you were snooping around this place the last time. Give him a call. You guys go back, and this is just simple transport, but you need it in a hurry, so let's call it **AP** vs. 7." Jenna rolls, getting a 4, plus her **Aptitude** of +2, gives her 6, just short. "Tough break. 'Yeah,' you hear him respond on the phone, 'I'd get right on that if I wasn't scouting the roads for traffic reports. Maybe if you give me a couple of hours?'" "Damn," Jenna says, "it'd be halfway through the party by the time he gets here, that's no good. What happens if I spend a Badass Point?" The GM replies, "well, he can't shirk his duties, but he might be able to swing around and pick you up." "Okay, Sanjay, I hear you," Jenna's player mimicks replying on the phone, "but maybe you could drop by my coordinates when you're in the area? How long would that be?" "Give it 30 mikes," the GM replies in Sanjay's northeastern accent. "I'm about ten klicks out." "Sure, we'll be here." "Just promise me you won't freeze to death. And the next time you go to one of these swanky parties, I want in."

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The Tactical Commander

Raven detected a sound: an engine. She turned to Bishop and tapped her ear once before calling her target: "BMP-2, AFV." Bishop perked his ears, listened closely to the chug-chug-chug *of an engine so distant no one else would have paid it any mind. "Raven, you're on overwatch, grid square 247 571." "247 571, copy." Raven hopped off the fast-attack vehicle, hefted her .338 and took off at a low run toward the hill. Bishop gave her a hundred-meter square this time; a little room to play around and set up a hide.*

"Ramirez, the BMP will slow down there*," he continued, as he gestured with the muzzle of his rifle, a custom Barrett modification on an M4, packing the beautiful terminal ballistics of 6.8mm Remington SPC. "Let them drop their guys and then open fire with the Deuce – what do you figure, half-dozen of them?" Ramirez didn't really know how to respond to Bishop's assessment; he did a lot of deduction without much intel. But hell, he always knew what he was doing; let him do the math. "Hooah," he responded, before standing up in the gunner position behind the M2 machine gun mounted to the FAV. He slid the heavy bolt of the .50-caliber behemoth back with one hand and set himself at low ready.*

Darius waited patiently at the wheel for his turn. Bishop obliged. "Taylor, half-klick orbit, follow the crest of the hill. Come around, goal is to be just in view there," he continued as he pointed again with the rifle, "at 2144:30, about ten seconds before Ramirez sets the world on fire. We have trouble, pull back around and get to Waypoint Kilo and wait for Raven." "Wilco, boss." Darius never liked playing the numbers game like Bishop did; he preferred played everything by feel. Nevertheless, his timing always seemed to line up with Bishop's, and neither complained.

About four minutes later, the FAV crested the lip of the valley, coasted a bit, before touching back down on the dirt road on the other side. Four soldiers rode, wordlessly, continuing on to their next objective. Behind them, the BMP sat as motionless as its crew and cargo, and just as perforated with neat half-inch holes.

The Tactical Commander sees a team as a well-oiled machine; every machine needs a mechanic. (Examples: Ding Chavez, *Rainbow Six*; John "Hannibal" Smith, *The A-Team;* Nick Fury, *The Avengers*)

Core Abilities

- **Tactical analysis**: You can analyze a tactical situation and plan its execution in mere moments. If you spend one turn analyzing, you can ask one or more questions that the GM will answer truthfully, with a level of detail depending on the result of a subsequent **Aptitude** roll.
- **Follow my lead**: When a group including you rolls simultaneously for a task they attempt as a group (climbing, sneaking, spotting, etc.), any member of the team can choose to use your roll in place of their own after the fact. *Example:* Say your team is sneaking through an enemy encampment, requiring a **Speed** roll. You roll a 9 total, and your team rolls 5, 8, and 12. The characters that rolled 5 and 8 instead use your 9. The character with the 12 still keeps his 12.
- **Motivator:** You know just the right words to say to get your team through anything. If you are able to speak to an ally at least one-way, you can spend Badass Points on behalf of that ally. You also start each mission with two Badass Points instead of one, and can hold up to four instead of three.

Evolution Options

Take *Tactical analysis,* or take both *Follow my lead* and *Motivator*.

Boosts

- **Danger sense:** If you're about to blunder into a trap, surprise attack, or some other imminent danger, the GM will give you a general sense of what's about to happen while you still have time to prevent it, if only a couple of seconds. You'll still have to figure out how to prevent it from happening, however.
- **Supporter:** When you successfully make a roll to set up an action for other people (but not yourself), your ally always gets serious advantage (+4) instead of advantage (+2) to their follow-up roll.
- **Walkthrough:** You can walk an ally through a task remotely – tell them what wires to clip to disarm a bomb, give commands to enter into a computer, and so on. When doing so, you roll for the task instead of your ally. (Depending on the nature of the task, your ally might have to feed you information – what wires are there, what options the screen presents – which could require your ally to accomplish a **Perception**-based task.)
- **Shoot first:** In a conflict or combat, you automatically get a free turn to act before the normal turn order starts, even if your side is taken by surprise or someone else declares an action, and any rolls you make during this free action gain advantage (+2).
- **Fifty moves ahead:** When you spend one turn analyzing a character, and make a successful **Aptitude** roll, the GM will tell you what his next few moves will be, given the current situation.

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Playing a Tactical Commander

The Tactical Commander's defining characteristic is that his main role is less to accomplish tasks and missions so much as help his team do so. Each of his abilities plays off his team's actions; therefore, his main role is to aggregate information and dispatch his team members to act on it. The Tactical Commander's Follow my Lead ability makes a team that much more effective as a cohesive whole, especially when paired with well-chosen Boosts. Equipment decisions are tricky, since the Tactical Commander should provide whatever is necessary to back up the team; it may behoove him to choose his Boosts last during character generation, and gear last during mission briefings, to make sure all the angles are covered.

The Tactical Commander's most important stat is **Aptitude**, as it is what drives his Tactical Analysis ability. Since the Commander will be at the forefront of most battles, however, the rest of his stats are still important. **Perception** helps him gather information himself, and also improves his shooting; **Speed** helps him move quickly and avoid danger; **Strength** keeps him alive. He should assign stats in a way that helps him stay in the right position alongside his team to make the critical calls.

Tactical Analysis

What gives a Tactical Commander the edge is the ability to quickly make inferences with the scantest intel. Your job as a Tactical Commander is to figure out the right questions to ask, analyze and formulate a plan of action, and assist your allies in its execution. The first thing the GM will tell you is "Ask me questions, and I'll tell you when to stop." Your questions need to be at least a little specific: "What should we do here", or "What should I know about this", are too vague. Questions to ask when using your Tactical Analysis ability include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- What's the approximate strength of the enemy force? How likely are they to bring in reinforcements?
- What is the enemy's most effective range, and where are their best lines of fire?
- What is our most effective range, and where are our best lines of fire?
- How do we best maintain our cover?
- What are likely enemy ambush points and chokepoints?
- What escape options are available if this turns sour?
- What is the enemy's biggest vulnerability?
- What is our biggest vulnerability, and how do we cover for it?

Once you ask the question, the target number on your **Aptitude** roll will depend on how specific of a question you've asked (specific questions are easier to answer), as well as how much intel your Tactical Commander is aware of. The roll will be easier if you have more information to go on. If you miss the roll, you'll get a true, but incomplete, response, leaving you to figure out what you're missing and connect the dots. The better your team fills in the gaps, and the better your analysis, the better the resulting plan will be. Though the GM will never give you false information, critical gaps in your analysis (via missed rolls) may lead you to make your own faulty conclusions.

Example

Again, let's take a look at the scenario in the splash text. Their buggy is cresting the hill, and Raven's just reported the BMP. It's an armored fighting vehicle, Bishop reasons, which implies it's loaded with troops, and there's a fight coming on. "All right," his player begins, "I'm going to do a quick Tac-Analysis." "Cool," the GM replies. "What do you want to know?"

"Where's their likely point of approach?" That's tough, since the sound is coming from a general direction, and there are a couple of equally likely choices. The GM calls that an 8. He rolls: 9, plus his **Aptitude** of +2, for an 11 overall. "The path, there. Gives their troops cover from the hill against anything on the other side." "Awesome. Raven, you're on overwatch," he begins, pointing to a spot in the trees flanking the approach, "grid square 247 571." "247 571, copy," she dutifully replies, and tells the GM she dismounts and begins her run to the designated point. "Next?" prompts the GM.

"How many guys are we looking at in that BMP?" The GM realizes that's not a hard question to answer, given Bishop's worked with those before, so he sets the target at an easy 6. Bishop throws a 5 this time, for 7 total, no problem. "Probably about eight. The driver, and of course one of them will likely be manning the turret, so you're looking at six infantry if they dismount." "All right. Ramirez, the BMP will slow down *there*. Let them drop their guys and then open fire with the Deuce – what do you figure, half-dozen of them?" "Hooah," Ramirez's player says, "I pull the bolt on the heavy machine gun and set myself in position."

"All right," the GM continues, "one more, since you've got time." "Where are we going to best be protected from the enemy, but still be able to be on the move if Raven runs into trouble?" That's complicated, but it's a pretty specific request, so the GM calls it 7. Alas, the die comes up a 2, for 4, not enough. "Good question. The hill's the obvious choice, but it's going to depend on when and where the troops get dropped, and if the BMP moves afterward." "Damn. Okay. Taylor, half-klick orbit, follow the crest of the hill…"

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Combined Boosts List

This is a list of all Boosts available to *Measure of a Badass* characters. Remember that characters aren't limited to their own Archetype's lists.

Gunslinger

- **Akimbo:** +1 to Power when using two one-handed weapons (ranged or CQC) against the same target.
- **Pistol marksman:** +1 to attack rolls using one-handed firearms.
- **Collateral damage**: You can readily make pinpoint ranged shots to attack terrain features to cause damage and destruction (catwalks, chandeliers, explosive barrels), and gain +1 to rolls made to both locate and attack these features.
- **Never stop moving**: +1 to defense rolls while in open terrain (dodging, not benefitting from cover).
- **Contact shot**: When you make a single shot attack (i.e. not using Autofire) using one or more one-handed firearms against a target within arm's reach, you may treat the weapon as a light CQC weapon for the purposes of attacks (**ST**/**SP** to hit, no disadvantage penalty). When used in this way, the attack's Power increases by 2.

Soldier

- **Volume of fire:** When using a weapon with the Autofire tag, you gain +1 to Power, and +1 to suppressive and covering fire attacks.
- **Heavy weapon expert:** +1 to attack rolls using heavy weapons, like grenade launchers, RPGs, mortars, and flamethrowers; also, ignore penalties to attack rolls from indirect fire.
- **Longarm marksman:** +1 to attack rolls making single-target attacks from a two-handed firearm, like a rifle or shotgun.
- **Grenadier:** +1 to attack rolls using hand grenades; also, ignore any penalties to attack rolls from cover, concealment, or skipping grenades off of surfaces.
- **Athlete:** +1 to rolls related to athletics, like climbing, jumping, swimming, or sprinting, and to rolls to resist fatigue.

Eagle Eye

- **Scout**: +1 to rolls related to noticing and interpreting visual or audio clues – spotting, listening, and tracking.
- **Piercing sight:** Ignore all disadvantage penalties to attacks and other rolls due to darkness or concealment.
- **Aim small, miss small:** You get serious advantage (+4) instead of advantage (+2) when you spend one turn aiming.
- **Close combat shooter:** You can fire a ranged weapon at someone engaging you at CQC range, or at someone else with an enemy engaging you at CQC range, at no penalty.
- **Be the bullet:** Ignore the first -2 in disadvantage penalties from attacking targets that are in cover or moving rapidly.

Shadow

- **Sneak**: +1 to rolls related to sneaking or hiding from notice.
- **Acrobat:** +1 to rolls related to acrobatic maneuvers, like jumps, tumbles, and balance. Also, you get +2 to Resistance rolls to absorb damage from falling.
- **Assassin:** When attacking an enemy, and you have advantage to your attack roll or your target has disadvantage to their defense roll, the attack is more potent, you deal 50% extra damage on any hit (or increase the potency of any special effects).
- **Fast hands:** You can *quickly* attempt to pick a lock, palm an object, pick a pocket, or perform other sleight-of-hand thievery, and gain +1 to related rolls.
- **Technophile:** You start each mission with 3 free Gadgets instead of just one.

Wheelman

- **Driver:** Choose a category of vehicle, from Passenger/Light Truck, Heavy Truck, Fighting Vehicle, Helicopter, Fixed-wing Airplane, Personal Watercraft, or Boat. You gain +1 to rolls when driving that category of vehicle.
- **Mechanic:** Choose a category of vehicle. You gain +1 to rolls made to repair damage or restore functionality to that type of vehicle, or to tune that vehicle for greater performance.
- **Scrapmaker:** You gain +1 to rolls made to attack vehicles, and your attacks against vehicles gain +2 Power.
- **Turned in:** While you drive a vehicle, you and allies riding in that vehicle (but not the vehicle itself) gain +1 armor against attacks made by enemies outside of the vehicle.
- **One hand on the wheel:** You can easily drive and do something else simultaneously without penalty.

Iron Hand

- **Black belt:** When making unarmed attacks, you gain +1 to attack rolls and +1 Power.
- **Unbreakable:** +1 to Armor Rating and +1 to endurance-related **ST** rolls (resisting poison, disease, suffocation, etc.)
- **Flow like water:** +1 to defense rolls against CQC attacks.
- **Opportunist:** +1 to attack rolls (armed or not) with an intent other than direct damage – disarm, trip, etc.
- **Zanshin:** You never suffer disadvantage penalties to defense rolls due to being flanked.

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Weapon Master

- **Hack and slash:** +1 to attack rolls with CQC weapons.
- **Dodge bullets:** +1 to defense rolls against all ranged attacks.
- **Archer:** +1 to attack rolls using a bow or crossbow.
- **Art of impalement:** When using thrown weapons other than grenades with **Speed**, you gain +1 to attack rolls. With **Strength**, you gain +1 to the attack's Power instead.
- **Guardian:** If an ally within a couple of meters of you is the target of an attack *that does not also target you*, you can intercept the blow without using your action or requiring overwatch. You become the attack's sole target for all intents. Regardless of the result of your defense roll, your ally is unharmed.

Field Medic

- **First responder**: +1 to first aid rolls, *and if you have the Field Surgery ability,* field surgery rolls.
- **Chemist**: +1 to rolls related to chemistry and biology, including the application and neutralization of poison or disease. Also, you recognize any chemical agent on sight, and recognize the effects of a disease at a glance.
- **Keep your head down:** +1 to defense rolls, as long as you haven't attacked an enemy during or since your previous turn.
- **Forensic tech:** +1 to rolls to perform forensic analysis on a body or scene; when you succeed on a forensics task, you also receive more detailed information.
- **Who's Hippocrates?**: You begin each mission with a few doses of a toxin of your choice. Subjects suffer disadvantage (-2) to attempts to resist these; *if you have the Toxic infusion* ability, subjects also suffer disadvantage to resist any other toxins you synthesize.

Sapper

- **Builder**: +1 to rolls related to constructing, maintaining, or repairing a physical system.
- **Electrician**: +1 to rolls related to interfacing, modifying, or disabling electronics.
- **Saboteur**: +1 to rolls related to demolition and sabotage of materiel, including attacking and planting explosives on vehicles and structures, as well as locating weak points. You also get +1 to rolls made to disarm bombs and other explosives.
- **Improv combatant**: Improvised weapons and gear you use don't tend to break easily, and you gain +1 to rolls using improvised gear. *If you are a Sapper*, this includes devices you constructed using your Improvised Construction ability, whether you're there to physically make attacks with them or not.
- **I've got just the thing:** You don't have to select all of your Gadgets at the start of a mission. If you reserve Gear Points at the start of a mission, you may use them at any time to retroactively purchase a Gadget. This ability does *not* work if you've been frisked or otherwise relieved of weapons and equipment.

1337 h4x0r

- **Grey hat:** +1 to rolls made to hack into cyber security; you also recognize the work of other hackers on sight.
- **Search-fu:** +1 to rolls made to obtain intelligence or research data; the data you gain is precise and easily applied.
- **Remote procedure call:** +1 to rolls made to remotely command or alter programming of a device. *If you are a 1337 h4x0r*, you also get +1 to attacks and defenses you make on behalf of an enemy vehicle or weapons system under your control.
- **Firewall:** If an opposing hacker attempts to shut you out of a system or attack systems you own or control (*including the B4d455 R1g* if you have that ability), you get +1 to rolls made to defend against the attack.
- **Enigma:** You can instantly understand and break codes and encryption (electronic or otherwise) on a successful roll; you gain +1 to rolls made to do so.

Smooth Operator

- **Trustworthy face**: +1 to rolls relating to duplicity, manipulation, and diplomacy; unless people have a reason to think otherwise, you look like someone who's reliable and easy to trust.
- **Crazy eyes:** +1 to rolls (tasks and mental attacks) when trying to intimidate someone into taking action, whether socially or physically; if you miss, the target is still at least a little bit intimidated, even if they don't end up doing what you want.
- **Always a tell**: If someone says something to you that is evasive, has a catch, or is an outright lie, the GM will tell you that you find something suspicious, and point to a verbal or non-verbal cue. It's up to you to figure out what and put that information to use.
- **Stash:** At any time, you can produce a pistol, knife, grenade, or similarly-sized weapon, even if you've been searched or completely disarmed. This doesn't work if you're restrained, or have no feasible place from which to draw the weapon. (You must have spent sufficient Gear Points on weapons to have the weapon at hand.)
- **Player:** Anyone of the appropriate sexual persuasion can't help but be at least a little bit attracted to you, regardless of circumstances. If you're able to use this as leverage, you get +1 to social rolls of any sort.

Tactical Commander

- **Danger sense:** If you're about to blunder into a trap, surprise attack, or some other imminent danger, the GM will give you a general sense of what's about to happen while you still have time to prevent it, if only a couple of seconds. You'll still have to figure out how to prevent it from happening, however.
- **Supporter:** When you successfully make a roll to set up an action for other people (but not yourself), your ally always gets serious advantage (+4) instead of advantage (+2) to their follow-up roll.
- **Walkthrough:** You can walk an ally through a task remotely – tell them what wires to clip to disarm a bomb, give commands to enter into a computer, and so on. When doing so, you roll for the task instead of your ally. (Depending on the nature of the task, your ally might have to feed you information – what wires are there, what options the screen presents – which could require your ally to accomplish a **Perception**-based task.)
- **Shoot first:** In a conflict or combat, you automatically get a free turn to act before the normal turn order starts, even if your side is taken by surprise or someone else declares an action, and any rolls you make during this free action gain advantage (+2).
- **Fifty moves ahead:** When you spend one turn analyzing a character, and make a successful **Aptitude** roll, the GM will tell you what his next few moves will be, given the current situation.

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Mission Procedure

Each piece of how a mission proceeds is covered in detail elsewhere in the manual – this is a quick overview of the rough process.

Briefing

The GM will provide the mission briefing to the players. The players' superiors or allies (whether commanding officers, handlers, or otherwise), or research by the independent player team, will provide all known and relevant information:

- Who is involved (enemy factions and individuals, if known)
- The problem, and the current situation
- The team's objectives (in the form of an Objective List)
- Any intelligence they are aware of that can assist – maps, dossiers, et cetera

This briefing can occur in character before the mission starts, or as a "flashback" and quick synopsis by the GM. In either case, players are encouraged to ask questions – the GM, in the role of the briefing officer, will answer them based on your team's available intel.

Character Selection

Each player either selects a Badass they've already created for the game to take part in the mission, or builds a new one to address the mission at hand. Players don't necessarily have to play the same character every mission! Feel free to build a character that best suits the challenges ahead. You can then use either one at the start of the next mission, or build still another! If this isn't the team's first mission, you can automatically advance your new character to match the capabilities of the rest of the team – see **Advancement and New Characters**, below.

Gear-up

Following the briefing, the team gears up. Each member of the team is granted a certain number of Gear Points based on the agency they work for and the type of mission; better, heavier gear is generally more expensive. See **Gearing Up**, below, for more on that. The players can re-equip between scenes any time they have access to their usual stock, and sufficient time to do so.

In certain cases, the mission's threat may advance to the point that the characters are issued heavier gear. At that point, the GM will announce the new number of Gear Points the characters receive, and allow them to re-kit.

Mission Execution

The mission now starts. Players take action as their characters at will in an attempt to accomplish the mission's objectives. GMs, there are guidelines for running a mission later, in **Planning Missions**.

Don't sweat the small stuff

Badass is a game about amazing people solving crazy problems. Half the fun is in creating a solution where none exists. To this end, *it's counterproductive to spend an hour or more on the briefing and gear-up*. The briefing won't be able to cover every eventuality – especially since much of the mission's play is improvised! Coming up with names and hair colors and such for everyone in the area of the operation isn't fun, and it doesn't add much to play. Choosing weapons and gadgets, especially, is more a matter of personal style and a character's capabilities than anything else, and you won't be able to have a tool for every situation. My advice: Pick the things that sound cool, or that you've had success with and enjoyed before, and go.

You will have the best experience if you jump into the action as soon as practical. Embrace the chaos, get out of your own way, and have a good time!

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Gearing Up

You can pick three types of equipment based on your Archetype: *armor, weapons,* and *gadgets*. Armor is some kind of bullet- or blade-resistant material, either woven into clothing, worn under it, or comprising the bulk of your uniform, as necessary. Weapons are obvious – they're devices you use to attack your foes. Gadgets are utility items, and take numerous forms, from bleeding-edge technology like fiberscopes, thermal rangefinding gunsights, grapple guns, and rebreathers, to more mundane devices such as C4 plastic explosive charges, riot shields, and simple battering rams. Finally, characters have whatever *free items* come to mind – simple tools like ropes, tactical knives, radios, and rations. (Free items don't need to be declared in advance; you just have them if you need them. See **Free Items** for more.)

Gear Points

Depending on the nature of the mission, characters will start with a varying number of Gear Points to spend on their equipment. The GM will select a number of points available to each member of the team at the start of the mission. Here are some guidelines to those numbers:

Type of mission	*Gear Points*
Low-profile; civilians, police, spies	2-4
Assault; paramilitary, SWAT	5-7
Mil-spec; military, special forces	8-10

Re-equipping

Between reels and scenes, circumstances may permit characters to adjust their equipment; the guy with the shotgun in the first scene might swap out for a suppressed sniper rifle and SMG for a later infiltration, say. When time and location permit, characters can swap out their gear between scenes for new picks. If the situation escalates and the characters would then logically be issued heavier weapons, armor, and gear, the GM may provide additional Gear Points for you to spend.

If you don't want to spend all your Gear Points, you don't have to – you can retain those for use later if you have the opportunity to swap out gear.

Armor

There are four types of armor to choose from:

Type	*Cost*	*Armor Rating*	*Load*
Concealable	1	1	0
Light	2	2	0
Heavy	3	3	1
Very heavy	4	4	2

Characters may choose whichever armor they like, at the appropriate cost in Gear Points. (Characters don't have to take armor if they don't want it.) Armor Rating is subtracted from any damage a character takes; Load is compared to a character's **Strength** to determine if they're slowed down by their gear (see **Load**, following.).

Concealing armor

Concealable armor isn't really outwardly visible unless the person wearing it isn't also wearing a shirt. Light armor is a little more obvious; if a character attempts to conceal it, a curious observer must succeed at a **Perception** roll to notice it. This is the kind of armor that police officers or bodyguards will typically wear while on normal duty. Heavy armor cannot be concealed at all – that stuff is serious battle armor. Very heavy armor is something like a bomb squad suit, which not only cannot be concealed, but is plainly obvious to even casual observers.

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Weapons

Instead of having an individual cost, weapons have a Weapon Level. When purchasing weapons, the total Gear Point cost for *all weapons taken* is equal to the highest Level of weapon you chose. For example, someone who spends 3 Gear Points on weapons could take any weapons they want with a Level of 3 or less. They could, say, take a rifle (Level 2), HE grenades (Level 3), a pistol (0), and a knife (0). The reasoning for this is pretty simple: in most cases, characters will be carrying more than one weapon (a rifle and a pistol sidearm, say), and they can't generally attack with more than one weapon at the same time (though they might dual-wield pistols, magnums, or SMGs). It isn't reasonable to say that a character carrying a rifle (Level 2) and a shotgun (also Level 2) is as dangerous as one wielding a light machine gun (Level 4).

Characters cannot buy weapons for other people; they can't, for example, spend their two points, buy five rifles, and give one to everyone on the team. This doesn't stop them from giving away their rifle over the course of the mission, but once they give it away, they don't have another.

Weapon attachments

Some attachments don't have any effect in terms of game mechanics; those come with a weapon for free if desired. Examples include reflex/red-dot sights, sniper scopes (weapons are assumed to have sighting equipment appropriate to their range category), laser sights, bipods, and so forth. Suppressors, thermal sights, and other attachments that provide benefits generally cost Gear Points to acquire (see **Gadgets**, below, for more details). Underbarrel weapons — sub-weapons that attach to a rifle, like a modified shotgun or single-shot grenade launcher – must be purchased as normal for weapons.

Carrying capacity

Rather than go to the extreme of trying to assign weight and bulk to every weapon in the game, and doing complicated encumbrance math, just go with a rule of thumb: a person can reasonably carry and readily access:

- Two decent-sized "primary" weapons (anything much larger than a pistol), presuming adequate slings and carry gear,
- A reasonable number of pistols, grenades, knives, or similarly-sized weapons, and
- A supply of ammo for weapons that require it sufficient to not worry about running out during the mission (unless the weapon is scavenged or has the Limited tag).

A character can requisition more weapons, but they have to have some place to stash them; a duffel bag (which slows them down unless they drop it), the trunk of a car, a storeroom, or similar. The character could also sling a second primary weapon and pick up a third, but they'd be slowed down (Load +1) and have to drop it before they could access one of their carried weapons.

Since the primary concern of this rule is weight and bulk, a rifle with an underbarrel-mounted subweapon (like a grenade launcher or shotgun) counts as two weapons, not one, for the purposes of carrying capacity.

> ***Underbarrel vs. separate weapons***
> In Badass, drawing a weapon takes a trivial amount of time. Therefore, it doesn't really matter mechanically whether a weapon is attached, or a self-contained unit, except in the rare cases where the character can't physically reach another weapon, or passes the weapon to an ally. Mostly, it's just "rule of cool". Don't worry about it too much.

Ammo is ammo

Badass doesn't simulate a fine enough level of detail to make specialized ammunition a practical concern. The difference between full-metal jacket and jacketed hollow-point rounds matters in the real world, but not enough for us to develop an entire subsystem around it. Therefore, most types of custom ammunition are a detail eschewed in favor of simplicity. If you'd like to specify a particular type of ammunition for characterization purposes, by all means do so, but it has no mechanical effect. (Raven the Eagle Eye would love to tell you about why a box of her match-grade boat-tail .338 rounds cost about as much as the rifle that fires them. Performance worth the price, after all.)

Weapon noise

Firearms, in general, are very loud. Characters within earshot of a firearm are guaranteed to detect it and know its point of origin, unless the shot is carefully masked by another loud sound, or it's suppressed. Explosives are the same way. Ranged weapons with the Quiet tag are very hard to hear in action, as are most CQC weapons (except the chainsaw!); a character would need to be pretty close to detect a sound out of the ordinary.

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Scavenged weapons
Weapons and equipment that you take on a mission are generally reliable, well-stocked with ammunition, and there when you need them. A weapon can still jam, you can still be disarmed of it, and obviously if you discard it, it's gone, but otherwise it's *usually* immune to breakage or other permanent problems (within reason – badly mistreat your weapon, or blaze away at every fleeting shadow, and you might find yourself in trouble or short on ammo). Scavenged weapons, on the other hand, are not immune. Action heroes will often pick up a nearby shotgun off an enemy's body, pluck a grenade from their belt, and so forth, and use them for a bit; but the weapon usually only lasts a scene or two. There's a reason for that – scavenged weapons seldom have a lot of ammunition, and you can't know how well the weapon was maintained.

A character can use a scavenged weapon for one combat scene, maybe two if they're short; past that point, the GM *may* require you to discard it, for one reason or another, whenever you strong miss a roll when attacking with the weapon (Alan's shotgun jams irreparably in *Jurassic Park,* Neo burns up the ammo in the assault rifle he scored from a security guard in the rooftop of the famous lobby scene in *The Matrix*) or on some kind of physical task (John McClane's submachine gun sling gets caught in the ventilation shaft and the weapon tumbles away in *Die Hard*), or if common sense would make the weapon unusable (grenades only work once!)

Custom weapons
You'll sometimes find characters who want to carry unusual, or custom, gear not listed in the tables. A police character may want an FN 303 pepperball gun, or an archer may want to carry incendiary and explosive arrows for her compound bow. No problem – weapons can be created from scratch (or by modifying an existing weapon). See **Custom Weapons** under **Going Full Custom**, later, for more. The important thing is the weapon's effect; you can describe it however you like, and call it whatever name you choose, as long as you pay the appropriate cost for its effects.

This works both ways. The "magnum pistol" could be a snub-nosed .357 Magnum revolver, or a semi-automatic Desert Eagle, or a six-pound Magnum Research BFR in .500 S&W Magnum with a ten-inch barrel and a telescopic hunting sight; call it Late For Dinner if you want. If you have a Level 1 magnum pistol, the effects are the same.

Sanity checks
The nature of this fairly open system can lend itself to abuse if taken literally – yes, ostensibly a Soldier, by virtue of his *Armed to the teeth* ability, could bring a flamethrower to a covert-ops mission where the team receives 3 Gear Points if he chose to spend all his points on weapons. But just because you can do that, that doesn't mean you should. If a player wants a gear item that seems out of place for the mission at hand, the players and GM should discuss whether it makes sense and would be believably issued to a character by their handler or agency. Err on the side of giving the player what he wants, but let common sense prevail.

The same judgment should be applied to the number of weapons a player requisitions – again, gear they take is intended to be only for the player who purchased them, not for the entire team. No fair buying six light machine guns and distributing them because you have the points as a Soldier. This is very much a "spirit of the rules" situation – discuss if something comes up that might potentially be abusive.

Load

The weight of all those huge guns and battle armor can slow you down. Wearing heavy armor or carrying big weapons (or too many weapons), if you're not built to handle it, can weigh you down, make you slower, and test your endurance. Your Load score is the sum of the Load you suffer from heavy weapons, heavy or very heavy armor, and other gear and circumstances. If your Load is higher than your **Strength** score, you suffer problems as follows:

*Load minus **ST***	*Penalty*
1	Condition: *weighed down*. Affects sprinting, athletics, and acrobatics.
2	Condition: *overloaded*. Affects all physical tasks (including attacks and defenses). Maximum speed is a slow jog.
3	Condition: *immobilized.* Character cannot do physical tasks until they drop at least 1 Load. If they attempt to move, the best they can do is a very slow shuffle.

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Weapon Picks

Total cost for all weapons you take = highest Level of any weapon chosen

Level	*Weapon*	*Base Power**	*Range*	*Tags*
0	Unarmed attack, gun butt	4	CQC	Quiet
	Knife, club, hatchet	4	CQC	Quiet
	Pistol/revolver	4	Short	--
	Crossbow	6	Short	Quiet, Reload
	Pistol crossbow	4	Short	Quiet, Reload
	Dart gun	--	Short	Quiet, Reload
1	Sword, crowbar, sledgehammer, axe, shovel, spear, fixed bayonet	6	CQC	Quiet
	Heavy sledgehammer	8	CQC	Quiet, Heavy
	Staff	4	CQC	Quiet, Sweeping
	Chainsaw	8	CQC	--
	Magnum pistol/revolver	6	Short	--
	Recurve bow	4	Short	Quiet
	Throwing knife/shuriken	4	Short	Quiet
	Taser**	--	Short	Stun, Quiet, Reload
2	Great sword/axe	8	CQC	Quiet
	Rifle (semi-auto/sniper/hunting)	6	Long	--
	Submachine gun/machine pistol	5	Short	Autofire
	Shotgun	7	Short	Spreading
	Compound bow	6	Short	Quiet
	Molotov cocktails	4	Short	Radius, Duration, Continuous, Limited
	Smoke grenades	--	Short	Radius, Concealment, Duration, Quiet, Limited
	Stun grenades/flashbangs	--	Short	Radius, Stun, Limited
3	Long-range sniper rifle	6	Extreme	--
	Anti-materiel rifle	8	Extreme	Heavy
	Single-shot/underbarrel grenade launcher	8	Long	Radius, Reload
	Fragmentation/HE grenades	8	Short	Radius, Limited
	Teargas grenades	--	Short	Radius, Disorient, Duration, Continuous, Quiet, Limited
	Teargas grenade launcher	--	Long	Radius, Disorient, Duration, Continuous
4	Assault rifle/light machine gun	7	Long	Autofire
	Assault shotgun	8	Short	Autofire, Spreading
	RPG	12	Long	Radius, Reload, Limited
5	Multiple grenade launcher	8	Long	Radius
	Flamethrower	10	Short	Autofire, Spreading, Continuous, Heavy
	Commando mortar	10	Extreme	Radius, Indirect, Heavy, Limited
	Missile launcher	14	Extreme	Homing, Reload, Heavy, Limited

* Attack damage = base Power + **stat** used to roll the attack.

** A taser can also be used as a CQC weapon with or without a cartridge loaded.

Weapon tag quick reference (see Weapon Tags for more details)

Autofire*	Can attack everyone in an arc; +2 to suppression attacks
Spreading*	You can attack two adjacent targets; ignore first -2 in penalties due to imprecision or concealment
Radius	Attack hits everyone within a few meters
Sweeping	Can attack enemies in an arc; +2 to trip
Duration	Attack lasts 3 turns
Continuous	On hit, effects repeat for 3 turns
Stun	Stun for one turn
Disorient	Disorient target (-2 to all rolls) for one turn (or 3 turns if it has the Duration tag) where disorientation matters

Concealment	Attack produces smoke or other concealment
Homing	Lock on for +4; -2 (or can't fire) if no lock
Indirect	Can make indirect fire; you take -2 instead of -4 when attacking a target you can't see
Heavy	Load +1 while carrying
Reload	You must reload the weapon after each shot; -2 to physical actions performed on the same turn reloading (including attacks)
Limited	Ammo is heavy – you might run out after a few shots
Quiet	Attacks make little, inconspicuous noise

* +1 Power increase is already factored into the weapon table.

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Gadgets

Gadgets are generic, high-utility items that don't fall under the purview of Weapons or Armor. They are items that can turn the tide of a mission, and ones that cannot be reasonably assumed to be on a character's person in general. *Your first Gadget is free* – thereafter, all Gadgets cost 1 Gear Point each. Where it makes sense, Gadgets can be taken more than once; for example, a player could spend two Gear Points to take breakdown options for two weapons. Treat any consumable Gadget (explosives, poisons, etc.) as having the Limited tag. If a gadget is critical to the completion of a mission (e.g. SCUBA gear for an underwater insertion), the GM may choose to provide it to everyone for free (not requiring Gear Points).

Infiltration and reconnaissance gear

- Lockpick gun (loudly slams open standard mechanical key locks automatically, frequently damaging the lock in the process)
- Grapple gun (connect to anything within Short range; pulls you to it, or it to you, whichever is lighter)
- Fiberscope/snake camera (slip underneath a door or around a corner and transmit to an attached eyepiece)
- Bugs (wirelessly transmit audio or video data to a remote monitor, or record it for future playback)
- Directional microphone (aim at something within Short range to hear sounds from its direction)
- Battering ram (**ST** roll to break down a door)
- Night-vision/infrared/thermal goggles (see in dark and through smoke)
- Glass cutter (cuts through a solid pane of glass to make a hole without breaking it)
- Disguise or cover identity
- Ghillie/sneaking suit (advantage (+2) to stealth rolls when motionless or moving slowly, and in matching terrain or surroundings)
- Caltrops (a bag big enough to cover a decent area; enemies who step through them suffer an attack; deals no damage, but on a hit, suffer the condition *punctured feet* or similar until they treat the wound)

Weapon attachments

- Night-vision/infrared/thermal sight for one of your weapons (allows user to see in darkness and through smoke while wielding the weapon)
- Suppressors for all of your firearms (pistols, SMGs, shotguns, rifles, machine guns)
- Breakdown option for one of your weapons (allows the weapon to be disassembled into innocent-looking parts for concealability and camouflage, and subsequently reassembled in a single combat turn). A character can ignore the Heavy tag on a *disassembled* weapon if an ally carries one or more of the weapon's parts

Protective equipment

- Tactical shield (counts as cover if it could feasibly block an attack; you can't use two-handed weapons while wielding a shield)
- Gas mask (protects from inhaled airborne pathogens)
- NBC (Nuclear/Biological/Chemical) protective suit (protects from pathogens and radiation; an additional complication of defense rolls is that the attack pierces its protection and renders it useless)
- Rebreather/SCUBA gear (breathe underwater for up to an hour)

Demolitions

- Plastic explosive charges, bundles of dynamite, or IEDs, with timed and/or remote detonators; used to detonate materiel, walls, and small structures. **AP** to set; base Power of 14.
    - Plastic explosives also come in the form of satchel charges, which are a thrown weapon.
- Breaching charges with remote detonators. These demolish a door while minimizing structural damage; **AP** to set. Your **AP** roll is an attack roll against anyone directly on the other side of the door with base Power of 4.
- Directional mines with detonators (tripwire, remote, or timed); **AP** to set. These explode in a wide cone within Short range of the mine. Treat the **AP** roll as an attack roll with base Power 8.
- Incendiary grenades, which release thermite or thermate to destroy whatever they're placed on, dealing damage like C4, and even work underwater! Unlike conventional grenades, they have no blast radius (since they melt rather than explode), and so are minimally effective when thrown unless they land directly on top of a target (trying to land a grenade like this is Attacking a weak point, and probably comes with disadvantage)

Poisons

Poisons can be administered via injury, injection, or fired via a dart gun. If the poison is delivered via dart or other weapon, its effects occur on a successful attack; otherwise, the target must roll **ST** vs. 8 to resist. Requisitioned poisons come with enough for a few doses.

- Conditional poison (applies a condition that imposes disadvantage on some rolls for a scene or two); choose from *truth serum, tranquilizer, muscle relaxer, blinding poison, hallucinogen,* or make one up!
- Knockout or lethal poison (deals damage; base Power 14)

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Free Items

Certain items are so inconsequential or essential that they're part of the kit of every Badass. *Don't bother to declare these items on your character sheet;* if you need one over the course of a mission, you just have it automatically, unless you're in a situation where you wouldn't possibly have access to it (imprisoned after having your gear taken, for example). Some examples follow, but it's not an exclusive list. As ever, use common sense to determine whether a character would have an item at hand.

- Food and water rations (if deployed away from an urban area)
- First-aid kit (practical gear to allow normal first-aid)
- Flashlight, headlamp, or lantern
- Rope, pitons, and anchors
- Binoculars/monocular
- Cellular phone
- Whisper radio (allows communication with barely more than a whisper)
- Lockpick set
- Small tactical knife/Swiss army knife (utility knife/multitool)
- Weapon attachments that don't affect game mechanics, or provide something the character already has: flashlights, laser sights, reflex/red-dot sights, telescopic sights, handgrips, camouflage, most special ammo, etc.
- Zip-tie handcuffs (quick, disposable plastic handcuffs in a long spool), or standard metal handcuffs
- Basic clothing, uniform, or battle dress

Improvised Weapons and Gadgets

Improvised items can serve as weapons, unusual gadgets or protective items. A nearby chair or pool cue could improve your attack power for a hit or two; a trash can lid could serve as a shield against lighter CQC attacks; a road flare could be used to ignite an enemy's clothing (**ST**/**SP** vs. **SP** to attack, Power 4, Continuous). Improvised gear generally isn't purpose-built; that chair, pool cue, and trash can lid will bend and break, and the flare will burn out. These items are usually only useful for one to a handful of attacks, defenses, or what have you before they're useless, and will often fail immediately on a strong miss. In any case, improvised gear doesn't last longer than a scene.

Weapon type	*Base Power*	*Tags*	*Examples*
One-handed	4	--	Kitchen knife, shard of glass, heavy candlestick
Lightweight bludgeon	6	--	Baseball bat, office chair
Lightweight pole	4	Sweeping	Pool cue, long stick
Hand-and-a-half	6	--	Sharpened rebar spear, lead pipe, cast-iron skillet, fire extinguisher
Oversized, two-handed	8	Heavy	Steel door, filing cabinet

Review

To gear up:

- The GM determines the team's starting Gear Points; each character gets that number of points, and they can't be shared.
  - Soldiers, or anyone that picked *Armed to the teeth* as an Evolution Option, get 2 extra Gear Points to spend on either weapons or armor.
- Pick your weapons:
  - Pay Gear Points equal to the highest Level weapon you take.
  - If you don't pay any Gear Points for weapons, you can still take Level 0 weapons.
  - Carrying more than two big weapons imposes +1 Load.
- Pick your Armor:
  - Cost is the Gear Points cost of the armor you chose.
  - You can choose not to take armor if you don't need it or don't want to spend the Gear Points.
- Gadgets:
  - You get one free Gadget. Characters with the *Technophile* boost get 3 free Gadgets instead of one.
  - Pick additional Gadgets – pay 1 Gear Point each.
  - The *I've got just the thing* Boost allows you to buy Gadgets during play at any time, without using a Creative Retcon.
- Hold leftover Gear Points to re-equip or upgrade gear using either downtime or a Creative Retcon (which costs one Badass Point).

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Off-duty Gear

When not on a mission, Badasses can carry any items they could have without spending Gear Points – namely, this means Level 0 weapons, plus one Gadget. If a character has a Boost that grants them extra gear (*Armed to the teeth* or *Technophile*), or adjusts the rules for their gear (*Stash, I have just the thing*), it applies when off duty as well. See **Play Outside of Missions** for more detail on this.

Examples

Ramirez and Lynx are gearing up for an assault on a Crimson Fist stronghold in the jungles of Cambodia. In pre-game discussion with Bishop and Aleph, Ramirez plans to go loud, carrying a big, booming weapon, while Lynx exploits his presence to silently flank and take out adversaries. It's an overt combat mission, so the GM gives the players 7 Gear Points to work with.

Ramirez is a Soldier, and his *Armed to the teeth* ability gives him two extra Gear Points to spend on weapons or armor. He chooses:

- 2 GP on weapons, increased to 4 via *Armed to the teeth,* which he uses on:
  - Light machine gun (4)
  - Shotgun (2)
  - Pistol (0)
  - Entrenching tool (a medium melee weapon, 1)
  - Fragmentation grenades (3)
  - Smoke grenades (2)
- 3 GP to purchase heavy armor
- 2 GP for Gadgets. He gets three total, including the free Gadget, so he chooses:
  - C4 plastic explosive charges
  - Claymore mines
  - Night vision goggles

Lynx is playing a Shadow, and she took the *Technophile* boost, which gives her three free Gadgets instead of one. She takes:

- 2 GP on weapons:
  - SMG (2)
  - Katana (1)
  - Throwing knives (1)
  - Smoke grenades (2)
  - Flashbang grenades (2)
- 2 GP on light armor
- 3 GP on Gadgets, which gives her six (!) including her three freebies:
  - Suppressor for her SMG
  - Night-vision goggles
  - Caltrops
  - Grapple gun
  - Directional microphone
  - Sneaking suit

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Mounted weapons

Mounted weapons may appear on vehicles driven by enemies or the players, or be present on turret mounts in entrenched positions or buildings.

Type	*Base Power*	*Range*	*Tags*
Machine gun	7	Long	Autofire
Gatling machine gun ("minigun")	9	Long	Autofire
Heavy machine gun	9	Extreme	Autofire
Gatling heavy machine gun	11	Extreme	Autofire
Autocannon	11	Extreme	Autofire
Heavy autocannon	13	Extreme	Autofire
Automatic grenade launcher*	9	Long	Autofire, Radius
Rocket launcher†	12	Extreme	Radius
Heavy mortar	12	Extreme	Indirect, Radius
Missile launcher	14	Extreme	Homing, Limited
Recoilless rifle	14	Extreme	Reload
Tank/artillery cannon	14	Extreme	Reload

* An automatic grenade launcher is a grenade machine gun; when making a spray attack, it can spray a wide area on the ground rather than point targets, so its area is a room and then some.

† By "rocket launcher" here, I mean a multi-tube launcher that can fire several rockets without a reload, as distinct from an RPG.

Fire-linked weapons

Having two weapons of the same type linked on the same mount (dual machine guns, etc.) increases the attack's Power by 1. Having four weapons increases Power by 2, and six or more weapons increases Power by 3.

Vehicles

Vehicles available for use during a mission are at the GM's discretion, although a Wheelman's custom vehicle is something to work out with the GM (and certainly have some input on) depending on the mission and the Wheelman's own proclivities. If circumstances dictate, the team or Wheelman can switch vehicles during downtime between scenes.

Vehicles have three main statistics: typical speed, armor rating, and armament. Armor Rating has already been discussed (see **Vehicle Health** under **Health and Injury**), but for completeness, *Armor Rating* represents the ability of the vehicle's plating and structure to absorb damage. A vehicle's Resistance score is the same as its Armor Rating, since vehicles have no stats (and thus no **Strength** score).

Armament includes the typical weapons installed on the vehicle; in general, one person operates each weapon. Certain exceptions exist: for example, "coaxial" weapons are installed on the same hardpoint, and one person controls both, but only one can be fired at a time. Some vehicles with an open-topped design, or retractable windows, may allow the driver or passengers to attack with hand weapons while inside.

Typical speed is the high end of the vehicle's cruise speed; if a chase occurs in which two vehicles can simply accelerate flat out (no hazards, shortcuts, or other issues), and one has a faster speed category, the faster one wins. There are four speed categories:

- Slow: About twice as fast as a human sprint; tops out at about 40-50 mph (60-80 kph).
- Medium: This is about as fast as most civilian vehicles can safely drive when not on a long straightaway; highway speed is typical, with a maximum speed of about 80-90 mph (125-150 kph) on the high side.
- Fast: A dangerous, but still controllable, speed on land; relatively slow in the air. Tops out at about 150 mph (250 kph).
- Very fast: As the name implies; this is typical cruising speed for helicopters or "slow-mover" aircraft, or breakneck pace for land vehicles, up to about 200-300 mph (300-500 kph). Typically, unless you're also in a vehicle matching speed, tracking or firing at a vehicle moving Very Fast is difficult.

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Vehicle	*Typical speed*	*Armor Rating*	*Resistance*	*Armament*
Civilian/Police Vehicles				
Bicycle	Slow	3	8	None *
Motorcycle	Fast	3	8	None *
Passenger car/SUV	Fast	3	10	None *
Sports car/ Police interceptor	Very fast	3	10	None * †
Van	Medium	3	10	None * †
Bus	Slow	3	12	None *
Armored car	Medium	4	10	None *
Personal watercraft	Medium	3	8	None *
Powerboat	Slow	3	10	None *
Light helicopter	Very fast	3	10	None *
Police helicopter	Very fast	3	10	*One of:* Teargas grenade launcher Water cannon (Power Hit, Disorient, Knockdown) * †
Riot control vehicle	Medium	4	12	*One of:* Teargas grenade launcher Water cannon (Power Hit, Disorient, Knockdown) *Plus:* Firing ports for hand weapons

* These vehicles are usually easy to shoot out of using hand weapons. Attempting to shoot a weapon while driving, or while the vehicle is moving faster than Medium speed, imposes disadvantage (-2).

† A police interceptor usually has a semi-auto rifle or shotgun strapped to the ceiling, and the officer's personal kit in the trunk. Police vans, helicopters, and riot control vehicles may be stocked with police weapons (rifles, shotguns, handguns, flashbangs, tasers, etc.), ammo, and armor depending on circumstances.

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Vehicle	*Typical speed*	*Armor Rating*	*Resistance*	*Armament*
Military Vehicles (Ground)				
Main battle tank (modern)	Medium	7	12	Tank cannon / coaxial machine gun Machine gun Heavy machine gun Smoke automatic grenade launchers (Autofire, Radius, Concealment, Duration, Quiet)
Tank (last gen)	Slow	6	12	Tank cannon / coaxial machine gun Heavy machine gun
Armored personnel carrier/ Armored fighting vehicle	Medium	6	10	*Two of:* Heavy machine gun Machine gun Automatic grenade launcher Recoilless rifle Missile launcher Heavy mortar *Plus:* Firing ports for hand weapons
"Up-armored" Humvee	Medium	4	10	*One of:* Missile launcher Gatling machine gun Automatic grenade launcher Heavy machine gun Machine gun
Fast attack vehicle/ Light strike vehicle	Fast	3	8	*Any two of:* Heavy machine gun Automatic grenade launcher Machine gun *Plus one of:* Mounted RPG Missile launcher *Plus:* Machine gun Hand weapons of driver/passengers
Utility truck/jeep	Fast	3	10	*Optionally one of:* Recoilless rifle Missile launcher Machine gun *Plus:* Hand weapons of driver/passengers
Technical truck (converted pickup)	Fast	3	10	*Optionally one of:* Heavy machine gun *or* Dual machine gun (Power 10, Autofire)
Field artillery	Medium	5	10	Artillery cannon
Multiple rocket launcher	Medium	5	12	Automatic rocket launcher (Power 15, Autofire, Radius)
Anti-aircraft gun	Slow	5	10	Quad autocannon (Power 15, Autofire)
Anti-aircraft missile battery	Slow	5	10	Homing missile

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Vehicle	*Typical speed*	*Armor Rating*	*Resistance*	*Armament*
Military Aircraft				
Attack helicopter	Very fast	4	10	*One of:* Autocannon Dual Gatling machine gun (Power 10, Autofire) Dual Gatling heavy machine gun (Power 12, Autofire) Automatic grenade launcher *Plus one or both of:* Missile launcher Rocket launcher *Plus optionally one of:* Door Gatling machine gun Door machine gun
Heavy transport helicopter	Fast	4	12	Door machine gun (one on each side) Rear machine gun (when loading hatch is open)
Light/patrol helicopter	Very fast	3	10	*One of:* Door machine gun Door Gatling machine gun Hand weapons of passengers (often anti-materiel and sniper rifles)
Airplane gunship	Very fast	5	12	Side howitzer (Power 14, Radius, Reload) Side heavy autocannon (Power 13, Autofire) Side Gatling heavy machine gun (Power 11, Autofire)
UCAV (unmanned combat aerial vehicle)	Fast	3	8	Homing missile
Military sea vehicles*				
Patrol boat	Slow	4	12	Forward dual heavy machine gun (Power 10, Autofire) Rearward heavy machine gun Side machine gun Side automatic grenade launcher
Insertion boat	Slow	3	10	*One of:* Forward heavy machine gun Forward automatic grenade launcher Rearward machine gun

* Anything bigger than these watercraft are really more setting elements than coherent enemy units – taking down a destroyer or a battleship, say, is a mission (or at least an objective) in itself!

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Advancement and Evolution

At the end of a mission, regardless of whether it was successful, surviving Badasses can *advance*, improving their capability and versatility based on the skills they learned during the mission. To advance:

- If your Badass has fewer than five Boosts (not counting free Boosts you receive from Core Abilities like *Weapon qualification*), take a new one from any list — it must reflect back on the things you did during the mission. If you didn't use a computer at any point, you can't take *Search-fu*, for example.
- Otherwise, if your Badass has five Boosts (again, not counting free Boosts), you *may* choose one:
    - Replace an existing Boost with another one.
    - If you have at least one Boost from an Archetype's list, e*volve* into that Archetype (see below).

Evolution

Evolving your archetype means your Badass is expanding their horizons and training, becoming a hybrid of their original Archetype and a different one. For example, your Shadow might become a Shadow Master (Shadow + Weapon Master), or your 1337 h4x0r may turn into a 1337 Gunslinger (1337 h4x0r + Gunslinger). After the requisite movie montage of training and new mastery:

- Erase any two Boosts. (They don't have to include the one for the Archetype you're evolving into.) This isn't to say that the character forgets her former abilities, so much as they fall by the wayside and become less important to the plot of future episodes/films.
- Gain one stat point, which you can place in any stat. No stat can ever go higher than +4.
- Gain one of the Evolution Options from your target Archetype. If you evolve again, you may not take the same Evolution Option again (although you can take a second option from the same Archetype).

For clarity, when you erase a Boost from your list when evolving, you can regain it with a further advancement; you just can't have the same active Boost on your list twice.

Advancement and new characters

When you build a new Badass at the start of a mission, you may automatically advance them to the same level of capability as the other characters present in the game. That is, if the team has completed one mission, you may build a new Badass with four Boosts instead of three. If the team has completed three or more missions, you may evolve the character automatically. If you switch back to a previously created Badass for a later mission in the story arc, you may advance them to the team's current power level in the same way.

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PART TWO
Running the Game

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Planning Episodes and Overarching Plot

If you've watched renowned series of action films and television shows, frequently you'll encounter that their plots are episodic in nature. Often there's a recurring villain or a mastermind behind multiple plots or crises, but in general, if you miss one episode, you won't be left behind. You can watch *GoldenEye* without watching *Thunderball*, for example, and it will still make sense.

Missions in *Measure of a Badass* are episodic in the same way. The player team is dispatched from their base of operations to handle a mission, and return there when it is completed, having a chance to restock their supplies and equipment, and regroup for their next assignment. If there's any long-term planning at all to be done in a recurring game of *Badass*, it's the establishment of a villain Mastermind for the purposes of a story arc (or even throughout the "campaign"). They'll show up behind most missions the Badasses come up against, whether overtly or behind the scenes, although the Mastermind of the organization will never show his face (except in interlude scenes or over view screens) until the climax mission, when the Badasses are finally sent to take the threat down once and for all.

Arcs vs. Stand-alone Episodes

Measure of a Badass can be played in two forms. The short form is a single episode, in which a villain and organization are presented, establish a threat, and the whole ball of wax is dealt with at once. *Die Hard* and its sequels are a good example — yes, Hans Kruger's brothers show up in subsequent films, but their plots are motivated by revenge, rather than being part of the same overarching goal. The long form is an extended arc, like a series of films, or a season of a TV show, such as the appearance of SPECTRE and Ernst Stavro Blofeld in no fewer than six films in the *James Bond 007* series, or SD-6 from the first season and a half of *Alias,* in which the same villain orchestrates plot after plot serving some kind of master plan.

Building a stand-alone episode is essentially just planning a one-off mission; we've already covered the process for that. The final showdown should be against a Boss, or multiple Elites — Mastermind enemies are really only appropriate for the culmination of a story arc. Building a story arc takes a little bit more forethought.

Story Arcs

For a story arc to make sense, we have to have one important thing in mind: the villain. Who's the bad guy (or the group of bad guys) orchestrating the whole scenario? If you have this first, planning missions for the villain to do will suddenly make a lot more sense (and then prevent you from having to come up with answers to awkward questions, like "Why was an environmental protest organization, whose primary message is peace between people and nature, planting a nuke in the middle of a city guarded by armed crazies?"). There are a few important questions to answer, *in order*:

- ***Who is the villain?*** What is the name of the ringleader and/or his organization?
- ***What is the villain's motivation?*** What does he want from the world? What injustice does he seek to correct?
- ***What is the villain's ultimate goal?*** What action does he intend to perform that will ultimately achieve his motivations?
- ***What is the villain's next step after he succeeds?*** What vision of the future does he have?
- ***What is the villain's modus operandi?*** What tactics do they use to achieve their ends? Political action? Corruption? Moles? Direct terrorism and attacks? Quiet abductions and assassination?
- ***Who are the key players, lieutenants, and subordinates?*** Give names of either people and their positions and roles, or subordinate groups the villain and/or his organization work through.
    - What are *their* goals, motivations, and MO? Do their actions and desires conflict with those of their sponsor? How?

You needn't set up everything you know about the organization up front – in fact, it's highly encouraged that you don't. A couple of words or sentences about the organization, its leader, its motivations, and its ultimate goal are all you really need; if more information is exposed in play, either through later inspiration, improvisation, or application of the Mountain Witch Technique, go back and adjust the answers to the questions above!

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As an example, let's take the Crimson Fist's North American Division:

- *Who is the villain?* The Crimson Fist North American Divison.
  - *Leader*: Brigadier Loren Stirkin, former United States Marine Corps colonel.
- *What is the villain's motivation*? Brigadier Stirkin grew disgruntled with the position of the USA in the world — seen as a big brother turned bully, with no ability to correct its course due to gross inefficiency in government and law enforcement. Stirkin's view is that the only way to correct the problem is a radical restructuring, breaking down the old order obsessed with self-propagation and replacing it with a new, efficient, loyal structure committed to the greatness of the American people — or at least the American identity.
- *What is the villain's goal?* Coup and overthrow of the United States Government.
- *What is the villain's next step after achieving that goal?* A people united under a leader, the United States would affirm its place as the greatest nation in the world, and command the respect and attention of the world.
- *What is the villain's modus operandi?* Quiet accumulation of personnel, power, and weapons via contacts in the United States and local governments. Assemble bases and prepare for a simultaneous attack. Works through subordinates and double-blind delivery procedures.
- *Who are the key players, lieutenants, and subordinates?*
  - Daimyo Kiresao, leader of the Crimson Tengu. Making a power play – wants to secure her position as leader, and possibly make a play for a global presence.
  - Col. Greg Hereford, NAD Southwest ground forces commander. Finds a kindred spirit in Brigadier Stirkin, as a former career soldier; working for the NAD gives him the chance to accomplish believable change at home and prove the case of American exceptionalism.
  - Bill Clever, US Senate Majority Leader (R-NV). Has advocated for increased military presence and pre-emptive warfare in nations seen to be taking operations counter to American interests; a pawn in the pocket of lobbyists for Crimson Fist-backed military-industrial firms.

And in a few broad strokes, we've painted a narrative overview of the NAD, and are ready for a campaign to shut their nefarious activities down for good:

> *The Crimson Fist's North American Division is a constant thorn in the side of military and law enforcement in the region and throughout the world. Brigadier Loren Stirkin, a former career soldier with the United States Marine Corps, grew disgruntled at what he thought were gross inefficiencies and failures at every level of both military and civilian government. One need only look at the modern international news media to see what a laughingstock the US had become. Power-mad big brother turned bully, they've been called.*
>
> *Stirkin would* **show** *them power-mad. These problems can only be fixed with a radical restructuring of control in the continent.*
>
> *The obsessively secretive man known only as The Commandant has observed Stirkin's work, and attributes his lust for control as a positive character trait, not a flaw. Stirkin was a pragmatic man who knew what he wanted from the world, and would stop at nothing to see it come to fruition. A perfect candidate for the Crimson Fist.*
>
> *The North American Division has a hand in activities as diverse as imaginable, not all of them illegal, and not all of them violent. But some of them, certainly. The NAD is constantly testing the waters for a full-scale overthrow of the American government. All over, financial rackets, trials of secret weapons, and even covert installations of hundreds of troops all across the continent. Left unchecked, billions of dollars would be absconded, scores of civilians to die at a whim, and finally, a full-scale invasion and military coup that would leave entire countries in the hands of the Crimson Fist, at the beck and call of Stirkin, and the Commandant, wherever he is.*

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Planning Missions

Play to the Players

Ideally, the players will have established characters before the mission begins. This is really useful when planning missions and scenes, since there's one crucial piece of information you'll get from the character sheets that you may not otherwise get: the Archetype and Boosts the player chooses tells you, plain as day, the kind of action that player wants to see from the game. Liz picked the Soldier with *Machine gunner* because she wants to get into serious gunfights. Jenn picked the Smooth Operator and the *Player* and *Duplicitous* Boosts because she wants intrigue, and scenes that get her team where they need to go through subtle, covert action. Kyle picked a Shadow with the *Electrician* and *Technophile* Boosts because he loves techno-thrillers; he wants to sneak through the shadows, crack security systems, and disable laser traps. Use these as cues; don't give one player what they want all the time, but make sure you touch on each of the elements on those character sheets as often as possible, and *at minimum* at least once in each mission.

Cycle of Play

Missions in *Badass* have a pretty regular cycle to them. Obviously, the content of the missions will change, but here's what needs to happen, pretty much in order:

- Briefing scene
- Gear-up
- Mission flow
    - First scene
    - Intervening action and Setpieces
    - Final scene

To get to the briefing, we'll first need to figure out the overall mission concept; that will determine what the players know, and also what scenes to plan for.

Mission Concept and Briefing

There are a few elements that go into the premise of a Badass mission. The goal is to create a believable plot, by determining how the action about to go down reinforces the enemy's ultimate motivation and master plan. When designing a mission, *before you do anything else*, answer these five questions, ***in order***. It's okay to go back and change things as you design, but start with this before you even think about designing enemies or scenes.

- ***Who is the enemy?*** Which person, group, or faction of the overarching villain group is causing problems?
- ***What is the problem?*** What trouble are they causing?
- ***What is their ultimate goal or motivation?*** What dark fate is in store if the Badasses fail, or never show up? If the Badasses don't show up, what dark fate will come to pass? How does it feed in to the enemy's goals and priorities?
    - These are the stakes of the mission; it gives the team a reason to show up, and a reason to care about the mission's completion. Usually, this is the obvious "plot" or goal at the end of the mission, but it needs to be in service to the enemy's desires, not the other way around.
- ***What are the Badasses' orders?*** How did they find out about the problem? (i.e. What's the "hook"?) What are their objectives, as understood by their handler? How solid is their intel? Do they know how solid their intel is?
- ***What civilians and allies are in the field?*** What actions have they undertaken to interdict the problem? Are they in trouble somehow and need to be rescued or assisted? (These characters may make good candidates for player-controlled Grunts; see **Troupe Play and Grunts**, below, for more details.)

You can see here that the way to go about setting up a believable plot is to work from the villains' motivations to produce a result that fits in with their goals. ***First why, then what.*** The results of the last two steps are pretty easy to package up and turn into a briefing for the player team; those pieces of information are what the players' sponsoring organization knows about the situation and what support is available, as well as a good benchmark for determining their starting quantity of Gear Points; see **Determining Starting Gear Points**, below.

With this outline in mind, let's set up an example mission.

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Brigadier Stirkin's North American Division is planning an overthrow of the United States government; to do that, they need resources, including weapons. A classic trope of the action genre is the construction of a superweapon – an unconventional weapon of mass destruction that would otherwise look innocent behind a front organization and presumed purpose.

- *Who is the enemy?* The North American Division, obviously, but they're acting through Primarch Electrotech, a defense contractor for the United States and Canada, and a front for the NAD.
- *What trouble are they causing?* They're working on a weapon colloquially referred to as the "Neuralizer". It's billed as a less-lethal directed energy weapon, but it's actually a broad-scale beam weapon that can be aircraft- or even satellite-mounted that scrambles neural connections, swiftly inducing brain death in its target, but causing little to no materiel damage, useful for killing occupying forces and marching into an unprotected objective to claim it without a fight.
- *What is their goal?* The development of this weapon would produce a device ostensibly useful for its intended purpose, but serve a twofold benefit for the Fist; first, they have a potent destructive tool, obviously, but it would also be a psi-ops tool, allowing them to remotely modify the low-powered less lethal version to suddenly overheat and kill its targets. America is already in hot water for causing civilian casualties – what happens if that button gets pushed further?
- *What dark fate is in store if the Badasses fail?* The Fist are planning a narrow-scale test at CN Tower in St. John's, Newfoundland. It's a high-profile terror target, and conveniently the location of a set of offices for Primarch. The device can be controlled remotely via the office, which is lined with a full inch (30 cm) of lead, which stops the beam. Since the device isn't officially acknowledged, the test can be disguised as an accident, but the result would be tens of thousands dead.
- *What are the team's orders?* Yggdrasil received intel that a small arms buildup is occurring in St. John's, which is unusual since there's no Canadian Forces presence in St. John's. Primarch is a known front business for the Crimson Fist, which makes a connection between the two make logical sense. Since Yggdrasil's primary objective is the defeat of the Crimson Fist, they're first in line for the mission, which is to investigate and report on any sort of Fist threat and stop it if possible.
- *What civilians and allies are in the field?* The Canadian Forces (their military) and the RCMP are obviously around, but having them march in without evidence would cause a political firestorm. They'll issue clandestine support, arms and armor, and move in for direct assistance only when a positive link is established that requires urgent intervention.

Combining the last two points, we get a ready-made briefing:

> *We've received intel that an arms buildup is occurring in the CN Tower in St. John's in Newfoundland. The Crimson Fist is known to have a front business, Primarch Electrotech, based out of the 14th thru 16th floors. Primarch Electrotech is a defense contractor for the Canadian and American militaries; it's no surprise that they have their hand in advanced weaponry, but they don't often traffic in small arms. As you know, the Yggdrasil Foundation has a NATO-issued kill or capture order on Crimson Fist personnel, but we need to figure out why the Fist is building up arms in the center of a civilian metropolis. The Canadian military can't risk direct action on an unknown threat in town, so they've asked Yggdrasil to send in a team to investigate, and neutralize any immediate threat.*

We also have a mission Objective List, which we'll set up on a card:

- Identify the source of the arms buildup
- Verify the presence of Crimson Fist influence

And of course later, the *real* goals will show up (see **Objective Lists** for more details on objectives that change over time):

- Locate the controls of the Neuralizer
- Disable or destroy the Neuralizer before it fires
- Obtain any available intelligence on the Neuralizer's production and plans for deployment and enhancement
- Neutralize or capture any Crimson Fist personnel on scene

This briefing can be given to the players in a conventional setting – sitting around a table, with the commanding officer standing against a map or a whiteboard – but motivation will pick up faster if the briefing is delivered *in medias res* as a brief flashback, or perhaps while the team is on their way to the mission site.

The mission title

All action movies or TV show episodes need titles. Something evocative but slightly vague is your best bet; think about the antagonists, the potential action that may happen, and the premise. (If you need examples, look at the titles of your favorite movies or TV episodes – there are thousands.) Considering we're dealing with a satellite beam as the main threat in the example mission, we'll call it *Light from On High* – that title evokes the idea of something out of the ordinary, while not spoiling the surprise of the beam of blue-white death that may well rain on the city!

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Objective Lists

We've established the basic gist of how to play from a moment-to-moment standpoint – but what about the larger play of the mission? *Objective lists*, presented on *objective cards*, are a helpful tool to keep play focused from scene to scene. Objective lists come in two varieties – mission objectives keep track of the flow of the mission at large, while task objectives determine the requirements for accomplishing a larger goal.

Mission Objectives

When everyone sits down to play, the GM will have an established mission plan. The plan itself – the people, places, and events – are not set into stone, but what is set is the machinations of the team's enemy, and what will go wrong if they abort or fail. The Badasses are here to prevent that dark fate from coming to pass. "Kill all the bad guys" is certainly a trope of action film, but in isolation, it's aimless, hapless violence groping in the dark.

Objectives are presented from a point of view – if the team is part of a larger organization, they represent the intel that the group has acquired, their understanding of the situation at hand, and the problems they're dispatching the Badasses to solve. If they're an independent mercenary group, they've received the intel either from their customer or via their own research. (In the second case, the first scene could very well be that investigation or research, or the receipt of their orders from the person or group hiring them.) Unsurprisingly, that intel is rarely complete; an unexpected situation could occur that complicates the scenario, or accomplishing one objective may well reveal another. The Objective List presented to the team is as complete a picture as the organization is aware of, but it will change over the course of the mission as the team completes or fails objectives, or makes them redundant.

Primary and secondary objectives

Mission objectives come in two flavors: primary and secondary. Primary objectives are the big ones – the mission is successful only if all of its primary objectives are accomplished. Failing or ignoring them will allow part of the mission's dark fate to come to pass – failing to repel an enemy invasion means they now occupy the town, its inhabitants subjugated, enslaved, or otherwise controlled. Failing to stop the countdown on an enemy superweapon means it fires and wipes its target off the map!

Secondary objectives are targets of opportunity; the team might do something extra that weakens the strength of the enemy force, or acquire important intel on their future activities, which can influence future missions.

A mission objective card has the *mission title*, and the list of primary and secondary objectives for the mission, as presently understood. The list can change over time, depending on what the team uncovers, so leave some room at the bottom!

Ballistic Identity

Mission Objectives

- Investigate the anomalous encrypted network activity coming from Edonia (primary)
- Determine presence or absence of Crimson Fist influence (primary)
- Avoid conflict with Edonian military (secondary)

(blank space for future objectives)

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Determining Starting Gear Points

The amount of Gear Points available to the player team on a given mission depends on two factors:

- The nature of the organization; what weapons do the player characters, or others in similar positions, typically carry?
- The operation; is combat expected, or is it intended to be a last resort?

There are three rough levels for equipment. I'll describe each of them and their typical wielders.

- **Low-profile (2-4 GP)**: Smaller and less conspicuous weapons. Issued when agents must navigate public space without drawing attention. The agency either does not typically carry heavy arms, or prefers weapons that are easily concealed either on an agent's person or stashed in some kind of drop or storage. *Typical users:* Spy agencies; beat cops; off-duty personnel; armed civilians.
- **Assault (5-7 GP)**: Contact and direct engagement with an enemy force is likely. Assault gear is more versatile and effective than Covert, but less conspicuous, lighter, and less expensive than full military-grade gear. Often serves as a compromise between heavy arms and practical considerations. *Typical users:* Paramilitary forces; SWAT teams; rear-echelon military troops or "high-speed, low-drag" assault teams.
- **Mil-spec (8-10 GP)**: The best and heaviest weapons and armor available. Issued primarily to military forces; conspicuousness isn't a concern. The agency expects heavy, front-line fighting against infantry and possibly armored vehicles at any time. To survive, agents must be equipped with the best and most protective gear available. *Typical users:* Front-line military forces and fighting forces equipped by a military (PMCs serving the roles of normal front-line soldiers, and long-standing terrorist groups often fall into this camp).

In some agencies, characters may be deployed with the same amount of gear regardless of mission. For example, James Bond (and the rest of the 00 Section of MI6) always carries his Walther PPK (or P99, depending) – and not much else – wherever he goes, regardless of whether he's having a drink at a casino in Monte Carlo or destroying a super high-energy solar-powered death laser. Meanwhile, military troops like the US Army, Marines, or its retinue of Special Forces, as well as secret military organizations like G.I. Joe, always carry the heaviest weapons available on their missions. For most others, it will depend on the mission. The agents of Public Security Section 9 (*Ghost in the Shell* series) carry pistols and lighter weapons typically, but when they assault a defended terrorist position, they make sure to load up. Choose whatever makes sense for the group and the mission.

Planning Scenes

A successful *Measure of a Badass* mission hinges on two critical aspects:

- Action heroes are proactive. The action follows them, not the other way around.
- Action stories rely on effective, jaw-dropping setpieces.

At first blush, this seems like a contradiction in terms: how do you create a story with interesting planned setpieces, and simultaneously have the story hinge on player action? Essentially, there's a critical mass of planning that needs to be done – enough, but not too much. How can we reconcile these two agendas?

A fundamental assumption we've made is that we know what mission the players are going to complete, but not how they'll get there. Barring the team wiping out at a critical point, the mission has a known start point (briefing, gear-up, deployment) and *possibly* a known end point (the final confrontation with the Boss, or the accomplishment of whatever goals he stood in the way of). Therefore, planning setpieces for the first and last scenes make sense. The question is *how* the players get from Point A to Point B.

But what about other setpiece scenes? We can plan those too, no sweat! What we don't want to do is put them in a strict sequence, because that would do exactly what we don't want – plot the players' mission path for them. *Action heroes are proactive.* The solution to the dilemma is, then, to have a few "puzzle pieces" ready to go, and as the player team plot their path, drop one into place when it makes sense, knowing that some of them may not come up (and that's okay). There are three types of these "puzzle pieces" at our disposal:

- *Enemies*: the minor hostiles that show up wherever they're needed
- *Setpieces*: the lynchpin blockbuster scenes that define action
- *Impressions*: places, sights, and sounds, the incidental window dressing that makes the mission and game world come alive
- *Interludes:* short side scenes that introduce the enemies' machinations

I'll explain each of these parts, and then demonstrate how they come together.

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First scene

The first scene is about the only time you will know, as a GM, exactly where the players will be and what the situation is. Variables tend to spiral out as the game goes on, and shoehorning things back to a known scenario is difficult – for most of the session, the best thing you can do is to let things take their natural course. But everything has to start somewhere, and only you know the mission at hand. Therefore, know exactly what's going on at the beginning, and go ahead and lay out a scene. Most importantly: make it exciting.

If you've watched a James Bond movie, you're familiar with its style of "cold open". A cold open is a term in television and film for a scene that occurs before the opening titles, and puts the viewer directly into the action, starting with a bang. This is a great style for mission layouts in *Measure of a Badass*. In a lot of roleplaying sessions I've seen, if the players start out with a drawn-out briefing, a montage of arriving on the scene, and an extensive amount of planning, it's very, very difficult to overcome the inertia and get the action rolling in a fast-and-furious pace. If the flow and tone are set from the very beginning of the session, the energy tends to stay up far more naturally. *It's easier to keep things going than to get them started.* Keep briefings short. If at all possible, explain the situation to the players *quickly*, have them gear up, and then jump directly into the first fight or sequence. You might even consider explaining the circumstances, starting the first scene, and then "flashing back" to the briefing and gear-up. Everyone will be eager to load up and get back into the action!

Bangs

We'll talk about this more in **Playing the Mission**, later, but when the first scene starts, don't just tell the players "what do you do?" right away. They'll have no direction. Instead, have something interesting happen to spur them to action. This is called a "bang". This doesn't mean a literal explosion (although it might!), so much as some kind of stimulus, something to get the ball rolling. A radio call, flying helicopters, one of your **Impressions** (see **Impressions**, below), the screams of civilians in the distance. Keep this in mind, because you'll use this technique whenever the players don't have a direction or something to do, when there's a lull in the action. Make something happen and *then* ask "what do you do?" If the players don't take the cue, bring something bigger – an assault, or something urgent. If they receive a stimulus and choose not to act, *force them to act,* or suffer the consequences of inaction.

Ending scene

The ending scene is another important place to focus. This is the climactic moment, where the players face off against the final antagonist; it pays to know how that's going to go about, lest things end at a low point. It's a setpiece you should be prepared to plan, with the explicit understanding that we don't know how or when the players will arrive. Therefore, be prepared to move the final battle wherever the mission naturally comes to a close. If a baddie escapes, the final scene may be a vehicle chase; he may stand to fight the Badasses in his office, or in a parkour chase across rooftops. It may be daytime, nighttime, the weather may change… Don't force the action to fit a mold, but let the action mold the final scene. Often, the unexpected turns are better than anything you can possibly plan.

Setpieces

There are certain things that work very well when improvised, and certain things that don't. It's hard to fly by the seat of your pants and design a multi-stage, riveting encounter with a well-coordinated force when you're slapping it together on the fly, one piece at a time. It's not *impossible*, and some GMs are astounding at that, but most of us don't think that way. On the other hand, it's wasted effort to put a lot of time into planning every single fight, every single scene and branching path that may or may not even happen! That said, when we sit down to draft a mission, there are certain images that tantalize our mind's eye. The all-out drive and jump across the chasm, or the shootout in the multi-story Grand Cathedral, or the arms bazaar where Col. Kalah is building up hardware for his expeditionary force. Each of these is a pivotal, spectacular point in the story. So why place them at one point in space and time and force the players' hand, or risk them taking a different branch in the plot and avoiding them entirely?

The thing about setpieces is that we shouldn't know the entry point; we don't know when the players will arrive. There's a degree of flux in the setting – the where, when, or how. A setpiece might occur when the players enter a certain location, or it may happen at a particular time (say, immediately after they blow a bridge, or receive an email, or whatever). It may come about for a variety of reasons. We shouldn't fix all of these, though; there needs to be at least some degree of flexibility.

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We may or may not know the exit point to a setpiece – for example, we know Col. Kalah is holding key information about the whereabouts of his Expeditionary Force Base, and the players need to find it and neutralize it, so they need to go through him to get it, and their next stop is likely the Base itself. How they find out about the arms bazaar is another question. So we'll hang onto the Setpieces and have them waiting in the wings; then, when the players take steps that would lead them to the scene, we'll drop it in their path. If circumstances change, we might adjust a few details on the fly; maybe they took an air vehicle instead of a boat, so they'll fight a helicopter instead of enemy patrol ships; but the focus is the same regardless. Or, presuming that the setpiece isn't a necessary condition for the rest of the action (e.g. "the big reveal"), we may not use the scene at all, if it never comes up. That's okay! If we don't go into too much detail, we can pick up that Setpiece and use it again in another mission, changing a few names and filing off a few serial numbers.

Here's an example setpiece:

> *The Arms Bazaar*
> The anarchist faction has set up open season on military-grade small arms. Rifles, RPGs, grenades, and innumerable other pieces of gear from the old Soviet bloc are on display and available to those willing to make an offer. The entire place is carefully monitored by anarchist marksmen and patrolmen; if an unrecognized face appears, it'll more likely be shot than investigated. Mishka Gregorov is here, flanked on either side by his bodyguards, perusing the selection to arm his attempt at a coup in Kazakhstan. If a fight breaks out, Gregorov will run for his truck and attempt to escape. The bodyguards will assist security forces in holding off potential assassins or abductors.

That's it! There are a few enemies you might tailor as being part of a setpiece, but the setpiece itself should be simple, explainable in a short paragraph at most. That leaves us the wiggle room we need to put it where it naturally flows in the action. This bazaar, for example, could happen in the valley outside Livanovka, or it could be in a hastily set up conference center in a hotel that's been "closed for renovations".

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Enemies

The places where mooks show up are numerous. They're like roaches; they're everywhere. If the team makes a lot of noise, or alerts the corrupt secret police, or what have you, they're likely to show up and cause trouble. It's not worth designing a whole group to the T and tying it to one location, if they'll never show up. But sometimes it's helpful to have the stats ready in advance if a fight breaks out. So, we'll lay out a list of potential hostiles; a squad of enemies, their equipment, and possibly an Elite or two that come in tow. And then, when it makes sense in the story, or seems like the right time, we'll drop it into the player's path, the same way we did with Setpieces. Perhaps the Tengu squad is stealthily tailing the team, waiting for them to dally just a little too long, so they can spring their ambush – or maybe the ambush is waiting for them ahead, who knows where…

We'll lay out how to design enemies in **Designing Enemies**, later; for now, here's an example set that would potentially come up in the Arms Bazaar Setpiece. You'll see that enemies are laid out in a similar manner to Badass characters, but (not surprisingly) have their own rules for generation.

Anarchist Marksman (Mook)
ST 0 **SP** 0 **PC** +1 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Armor 2

Light armor (AR 2)
Sniper rifle (dmg 7, Long)
Pistol (dmg 5, Short)

Tactics:
- Remain in position, scout and scan for targets
- Once firefight has started, fire on isolated/exposed targets
- Do not abandon post unless under direct attack

Anarchist Patrolman (Mook)
ST +1 **SP** 0 **PC** 0 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Armor 2

Light armor (AR 2)
Submachine gun (dmg 5, Short, Autofire) *OR* Shotgun (Power 9, Short, Spreading)
Pistol (dmg 4, Short)
Combat knife (dmg 5, Quiet)

Tactics:
- Walk the crowd, staying in sight of allies, but spread out as much as possible
- Coordinate to flank potential threats before engaging
- Move to cover and engage from multiple angles

Gregorov Bodyguard (Tough)
ST +1 **SP** +1 **PC** +1 **AP** 0
Health 2 Resist 11
Armor 2
Boosts: Unbreakable, Guardian

Light armor (AR 2)
Machine pistol (dmg 6, Short, Autofire)
Pistol (dmg 5, Short)
Smoke grenades (Short, Duration, Concealment, Radius, Quiet, Ready)

Tactics:
- Stay close to Gregorov, and defend him from threats
- Throw smoke grenades to cover escape routes
- Prioritize holding off enemy attackers over escaping with Gregorov

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Impressions

Impressions are the incidental sights, sounds, people, places, and things the team might come across as they progress. These are a list of one-off ideas that we'll place in our peripheral vision, which we'll bring into the light when it seems right. *Impressions* are short phrases or single sentences. For example: "a bombed-out village, destroyed for resisting General al Dossari's regime". How the players might come across that could come from a number of different directions; maybe the player team asks a local, or maybe they're driving down a main highway in Val Verde (or flying over it!) and see the scorch marks and collapsed buildings. The effect of the information could be anything; maybe they'll ignore it and press on, feeling a sickness in the pit of their stomach at the cruelty of al Dossari. Maybe it'll pique their interest and they'll stop to investigate, where we could describe the devastation.

Maybe another impression comes up: "a war orphan, eager to see Dossari fall but unsure how to put his plan in motion". That kid could've shown up somewhere else, maybe as a street urchin in the marketplace, which is perfumed with the "sweet and bitter scent of exotic spices". Maybe that scent flitted in and out as the Wheelman leaned on the throttle of his Veyron, or maybe the Shadow detected it as she was infiltrating the Sultan's palace, or maybe it was what greeted the Smooth Operator as she entered his private chambers, disguised as his new nubile, young concubine. The possibilities are endless, and as GM, we should bring them into play, without going to great pains to plan every word in every location.

Impressions are useful when you're grasping for scene detail, and especially when the players look to you for stimulus; they can be a "bang". Wandering dumb civilians in the area asking the player team for food, or scorch marks on the ground to investigate – it gives the players something to focus on and follow. The best place to do this is during the *Establishing Shot* of a scene (see **Playing the Mission**, later), but whenever they come up, or the camera stops on them, don't hesitate to bring one into view.

Interludes

In most action shows or films, the action will cut away at one point or another in order to demonstrate firsthand the opposing mastermind's plans, goals, or character. An interlude is a short scene, no more than about sixty seconds or so in length, highlighting one action or component of the plan, or the boss's interaction with one, or a handful of, subordinates. The GM can deliver this himself, describing the action as it appears on camera – the view zooming into the shipping label on a container marked "RADIOACTIVE", or component pieces of the Shuggoth Tank – or playing out the adversary's speech to his troops. Of course, since talking to yourself is all kinds of awkward, you can always enlist the help of one or more players to represent the lackeys or lieutenant in the conversation! It keeps the players involved and makes things more entertaining for everyone. Once the quick point is delivered, the camera returns to the Badasses and their next step in thwarting whatever terrible plot their adversary just shared with the viewers at home.

Let's set up a simple example – it's Commander Treynor addressing his loyal contingent of Crimson Elite Guard. The GM turns to the players: "Okay, you guys are members of the Elite Guard in the audience. Treynor is about to take the podium; how are you feeling?" The players set the tone, or even converse in character amongst themselves as the enemies, before Treynor commands attention and delivers his grand inspirational speech. Closing, Treynor shouts the Crimson Fist Final Purpose: "For the destruction of the establishment, and the creation of the New Order, we salute! We are the Crimson Fist!" The Elite Guard join in unison: "*We are the Crimson Fist!*"

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Bringing it All Together

Do you see how these elements can come together to build a mission that satisfies our two stated goals? The player team will discover things as they go, as we examine the action and drop pieces in their path when it follows from the story – and yet each of these we assembled ahead of time, so their presentation is seamless, or at least nearly so. And each piece is lightweight enough that, if it never comes up, we can dispose of it, or rework it, without too much headache or heartache.

No preconceived notions!

One last, important point: do not – and I'm not messing around here, *do not* – set up a clue chain or other contrived nonsense ahead of time. Don't set up a singular solution to a mystery plot, blocking the action contingent on the players coming to the same conclusion you did about a piece of information or chain of events, or solving some kind of puzzle, because they probably won't, and everyone (including you) will be champing at the bit for the next piece of the action with no way to get there. The action should follow the players, rather than leading them. If they come up with an idea, solution, or a plausible chain of events that directs them to another big scene based on these impressions, go with it! If it seems like they're breezing along from scene to scene, good! That kind of nonstop flow of action is what we want to encourage, not prevent! Let the players tell *you* the answer, forming a mass of speculation and investigation into something cool. Let them tell you why they're right.

So, we have all the elements of a completed mission plan:

- Concept
- Briefing and Mission Objectives
- First and last scenes
- Setpieces
- Enemies
- Impressions

Play Outside of Missions

Periodically, the team might find itself in play without a formal mission. Usually this will be downtime, but occasionally, bases get attacked, planes they're conveniently on get hijacked, and the like. When the team finds itself outside of a mission, they have basic, practical gear, usually anything they could obtain with zero Gear Points. If a character has abilities that let them start with extra gear – *Armed to the teeth* or *Technophile* – those still apply. As GM, use your judgment; for example, if a character always carries a sidearm (worth 1 point at most – a magnum, sword, etc.) or a gadget all the time, it's reasonable to just let them have it, as long as everyone's okay with it.

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The players will probably win

As a GM, you may be shocked at how powerful the player characters really are. Yes, they really can handle being outnumbered two-to-one in a fight against Mooks with no sweat. Yes, they can bring a sword to a firefight against a tank and win, consistently. The question becomes, then, how do you challenge characters that are that dangerous?

The Badasses wouldn't be deployed on a mission if there weren't some kind of serious threat that no one else could handle. Don't be afraid to think about the mission's "dark fate" – that is, what would happen if the enemy's plans were to go unopposed? Whatever that is, bring it into play! There's a civilian population, or an allied force, that's actively being pinned down or attacked by the rogue battle train. The nuke is scheduled to go off in 24 hours. Panoptic Corporation is going to take over the New York Stock Exchange and have exclusive command of the world's wealth. Without teeth, the threats in the mission briefing are so much window dressing.

With characters as dangerous and powerful as Badasses are, the enemy will need to answer them with a similar threat. Do not be afraid to introduce a task, threat, combat, or other circumstance having no idea how the players will be able to accomplish it. Not literally impossible, mind, just without any notion of a practical solution. Where there's a will, there's a way. If you're in doubt about whether a task seems too difficult, it's probably just as difficult as it needs to be. In a playtest, I once introduced a boss enemy that had a litany of weapon systems, armor so tough that the players' likely weapons weren't going to be enough to crack it, and with an extremely capable vehicle commander. I had no idea how the players would go about defeating it. Turns out, I hadn't considered the possibility that they might just sneak behind the commander's back and *steal the final boss out from under his nose*. I eventually watched as the team *controlled the boss vehicle* against the Elite-class "mini-boss" of the mission, blowing it out of the water. And it was *awesome*.

Forced failures are the worst possible option

Do not, *do not,* ***DO NOT*** set up a situation from which the players cannot possibly escape, for the sole purpose of getting them into a situation where they are captured. What you'll have done is essentially decide in advance that the players will be incompetent and forced to fail. There's no faster way to make a player disgruntled than to effectively say "just stop rolling, you lose because I said so". Whatever you do, don't forget that *you don't write the script for the players*; you're part of the script team, yes, but not all of it. Put the players in hot water, challenge them to the utmost, but make sure they have a way out. And if they succeed, celebrate!

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Playing the Mission

Let's get this straight right now – *the single most important part of a great Badass game is flow, period.* Action movies don't stall out – the heroes make something interesting happen, or the action sets up something interesting that happens to them, prompting them to react. In any case, it's important to have our ducks properly aligned, knowing when to drop the right detail. For that purpose, *Badass* breaks scenes into a cycle of *phases*, each of which flows into the next.

This is a critical concept, so let me state this in no uncertain terms: ***scene phases (and how they exploit your prep) are the single most important thing to get right as a Badass GM.*** If you can master this, running an exciting game night after night will follow.

Scene Phases

The term "scene" means *almost* everything you expect in a roleplaying game; it's set up in a particular location that either doesn't change or changes monotonically (a car chase down a multi-lane highway, for example). The protagonists enter, deal with some kind of conflict or exposition, and move on, with the results of their action leading to the next scene. What makes RPG scenes different, of course, is that the players write the script for the protagonists – there is no one writer controlling the situation, and so we don't really know exactly what the next scene will be. Therefore, the GM needs to take a more dynamic approach to scene building.

Each scene has a flow broken up into four *phases.* Each phase sets up the next one, and when we get to the end of the *Resolution Phase* at the end of the cycle, presuming the mission hasn't ended as a result of the scene, we return to the *Setup Phase* to introduce the next scene.

- **Establishing Shot**: The establishing shot is what sets up the scene in the camera's eye. As the players enter, the GM pans the camera around the area. He honestly describes what the players see, glossing quickly over details that are window dressing (cribbing from the mission's Impressions list), letting the camera stop for a moment on the central focus of the scene. This may includze establishing a threat – if the resolution of the previous scene set up an ambush, mooks rappel in from the windows or what have you – or it could be a moment of tension, before the real threat shows its cards. Leave blanks for further exposition if the players have questions, but don't leave out important details that are obvious to the characters. Then, the GM answers players' questions about what's happening, or any details they need to better visualize the circumstances.
- **Setup Phase**: With the scene established, it falls to the table to set up where the players are in relation to it. What's their approach? This is what gives the players the opportunity to make a plan before the meat of the scene happens, and allows us to elide the slow process of window dressing anything except for the important stuff. The Eagle Eye wants to be on top of a nearby hill, hiding in a bush? Cool, if there's a feasible way for her to be there before the action starts, she's there (although if there's some doubt, have her make a roll or two as necessary). Just get to the point and go.
- **Action Phase**: This is where the action happens. The players act (or react), making choices and taking actions. The action follows them; and the GM describes the results of player action, going to the dice when an important outcome is in question, as previously discussed. As the players move through the scene, they will glean further details, meet whatever conflict is in play, and resolve it one way or the other. With the information and changes that have occurred, the players will decide where to go next (whether as a whole or split up), and the scene ends.
- **Resolution Phase**: The GM will take stock of what happened during this scene (and perhaps previous scenes) and use it for two purposes:
    - Setting the next scene. If a Setpiece makes sense at this point, the GM prepares it now. Otherwise, he'll process where the players end up next, perhaps asking them a question or two, and then set up the next scene.
    - Determining what happens offscreen. If the players left enemies (or certain civilians!) conscious and free to move, they may face reinforcements from behind. Or the enemy may entrench their positions, reinforce their remaining personnel, or reposition their forces.

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Establishing Shot

If you've watched just about any action media, you know what an establishing shot is and how it works. The camera is some distance away, panning the area, stopping on fine details sometimes, establishing important details about the environment (setting up Chekhov's Guns, maybe, or just providing context), setting the mood, and so on. We find out the setting of the scene – time of day, location (identified by landmarks or prominent features), and who's there (at least to the casual observer). Their positions and intentions are revealed in the Setup Phase, but we at least get a gist for what's *roughly* happening.

Impressions and window dressing

The Establishing Shot is a great place to introduce impressions – by showing a market, filled with *the scent of exotic spices,* and talking about *a bunch of war orphans, looking scorned and mournful*, we find out what's going on, bring up a few extras who may (or may not!) be important to the scene, and evoke imagery in the players' minds.

Selecting enemies

If there's likely to be a fight in this scene, this is the time you pick the enemies in play. Who are they? How many? Do they have reinforcements? Where are they right now, and what's their current plan? (If the enemy has the drop on the players, or are preparing an attack, obviously that's the plan; otherwise, what is their typical moment-to-moment behavior given the current circumstances?) Figure that out, and present whatever is currently obvious and visible to the players.

Location details, and Chekhov's Gun

Impressions are small things that may or may not come into play. Bringing up details (a hilltop or sentry post, crates full of vegetables dotting the courtyard, the twists and turns through the valley in the road ahead) gives the players an idea of the layout of the physical space of the scene. These are more likely to come into play in the Setup Phase, as it gives the players ideas of available cover, paths to take, and so on.

Then there are accidents waiting to happen. The term "Chekhov's gun" refers to a literary device that comes up in fiction time and time again: "Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." Obviously, as GM, we're not the only person writing the story, so we have no way (and no reason!) to guarantee the gun will go off, but if we let the camera linger on the thing for a moment or two, we spur the players to either set it in motion, or at least clue them in to the possibility. These are things like "a rickety bridge, barely holding its weight", or "a trio of barrels, bright red, labeled 'explosive'". Now the players know these things are waiting to go off – or when they go off at the hands of their foes, they won't be blindsided.

What isn't a scene

Remember one of the cardinal rules of pacing: *the scene starts when something interesting is about to happen* (or is already happening). If nothing interesting is happening (say, it's just the flight to the staging ground for the mission), we can gloss over it, using cinematic terminology to describe what goes by in the window, and maybe ask the players what their characters are thinking or talking about, and then move on to the *real* scene, which is what exciting thing happens next! The same is true if we have a potential scene that the players choose to pass up – if we establish a couple of refugees walking along the road, looking to the team to help, and they decide they don't have time to stop, just quickly describe what happens and move onto establishing the next scene.

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Setup Phase

With the establishing shot concluded, we can finally get the characters involved. This means both the players and their adversaries. The setup phase can happen one of two ways:

- If there isn't a conflict already started when the scene begins (such as the players getting ambushed, blindsided, stumbling into a trap, etc.), the players determine their initial positions and what their plan is. Then we start the action.
- If there *is* a conflict already started, the adversity has the initiative, whether human or terrain. Establish their position and intentions, but stop short of their first move. The players don't have the time to set things up according to their desires, but we need to at least figure out where they are before the explosions start.

If there are details not established during the Establishing Shot that the players want to know about or the GM figures are relevant, it's okay to introduce those in the Setup Phase. *Encourage your players to ask questions!* You're just one person, and you're not going to think of everything. Every now and then, you might even make a mistake and leave out a detail that might be important. The Shadow might ask, "How's the lighting? Is there anywhere dark I can hide myself?" Or your Weapon Master, looking for an edge, might ask, "Where can I find something like a fire extinguisher or something else big and heavy to use as a weapon?" Along the same vein, favor high-level detail, not tiny features. By letting your players flesh out the scene for you, everyone gets to contribute. If you can, spend less than a minute on the establishing shot, or the players might get distracted by unnecessary detail and lose the focus of the scene. Again, flow is the single most important thing, and we want to get to the part where the players are involved as soon as we can (but no sooner).

Players have the initiative (no conflict in play)

Let's set a scene, and we can use that to demonstrate a Setup Phase in practice. The team is riding their fast attack vehicle on a mountain road. General Al-Dossari, the Kazakh general in the pocket of the Crimson Fist, has reinforced the village of Taldyr, at the bottom of the hill, and used it as his base of operations. With the General finally cornered, it's time for the team to set up their assault. The GM asks the team: "You've seen the village on satellite, it's a small village at the base of the hill, surrounded on all sides by a prefab concrete wall, with gates on three sides. The General is somewhere in there, waiting. From the mountain, you have a good view of the village from on high, and you can see a few guys on a couple of watch towers, as well as a patrol on the road in the distance in some kind of a truck. Hard to tell from here. So what would be your approach?"

Bishop, mutually agreed team lead, speaks first: "My first preference would be to attack from a few angles. There's a spot on the mountain where we can park the FAV, set up an overwatch position for base of fire, while a second team assaults the town directly?" "Sure," the GM responds. He thinks for a minute and sketches a very basic aerial map. "So you're driving on a winding road along a cliff face. A waterfall comes in from the left, creating a small gap in the road, across which a heavy log bridge, bound by thick ropes, spans. There's a few trees, and the rock is pretty craggy. To the right, past where the waterfall lets out into a small lake some 100 meters below is the village." This is all ad-libbed; the only thing in the GM's notes was the basic stuff in the previous paragraph above, the rest is spitballing. Our goal here is to limit the time we spend establishing detail that isn't relevant to the scene; as long as it makes sense and is fair, use your imagination.

Raven's player says, "I don't like that bridge. It could fall if it took a bad hit, right?" "It'd have to be an RPG or some kind of bomb, but it's possible," the GM responds. "Okay," Raven continues, "so if the rock is craggy, say there's a flat outcropping somewhere I could climb up and set up a sniper hide? Bishop, that would provide overwatch for the assault." "Sure, makes sense!" says the GM. "There'd have to be something, if you can get there. The going isn't too tough, but some of those ledges are pretty narrow, so we'll call it **SP** vs. 6." Raven rolls, getting a 7, plus her **Speed** of +1, for a total of 8.

"Cool," the GM responds, "you're there. Now, Bishop, given that Raven has good eyes on the city with her scope, you know there are a couple of gates. They're not well put together, you could probably blow them with sufficient force." "Okay, so let's say Taylor and I set up down there, Ramirez, you want to find a position further back on the road and launch some indirect fire with the mortar?" "Hell yes, I do," Ramirez says. The GM hasn't described much in the way of a better position, so he chews on it, and says, "Sure, let's say you came out of a tunnel, a little ways around the mountain, but if you line it up just right, you can get an angle about 90 degrees distinct." "Which will give us a flanking bonus when we both open up?" "Sure, as long as you both have line of sight. Raven can call targets for you, too." "Sweet, okay, so that's our plan. Bishop, you and Taylor attack the gate, Raven and I provide cover fire." "Awesome," Bishop concludes. "Everyone set? Let's rock and roll."

The detail the GM came up with at first was very sparse. Most of the scene was prompted by players asking questions, trying to set up the view in their mind's eye. Scene setting in *Measure of a Badass* can be as collaborative an effort as you want it to be; let the players surprise you with fun detail and you'll end up with something a lot more interesting than you would have been able to develop alone.

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Adversity has the initiative (active conflict in play)
Let's start with the same establishing shot, except we'll change things up a bit. Perhaps in an earlier scene the team let a high-value target, a spy of some sort, get away during a chase, and she's reported to the General. So we're in the same boat, but now, the General has a welcoming party to meet them halfway.

"As the FAV comes out of the tunnel and turns, you see the road ahead of you wind down the hillside, and a rickety rope bridge. On the other side, though, are a couple of trucks; they're slapdash technicals, but they have thick panels bolted to the side for improvised armor and a pair of machine guns mounted to the back of each one. No sooner do you see that than an explosion collapses the log bridge, which tumbles away into the waterfall below. Okay, so real quick, how are you arranged on the FAV?"

"Taylor's driving, obviously," says Bishop's player. "Ramirez is on the gun, I'm in the passenger seat, and Raven is in back. That sound about right, everyone?" "Yeah, makes sense," Raven's player responds. "Crap," Taylor's player curses. "So this is no good, we don't have any time to get prepped. Say I back up and duck back in the tunnel?" Bishop interjects, "No way, man, that's a chokepoint, we'll never get back out of there." "Sure, so forward it is. Do I find like a big rock or something to park the FAV behind so we don't get blown off the road?" "Not a big rock," the GM responds, "but an outcropping of a few thick trees. You don't have a lot of time, but you can at least get behind there." "You said there were watchtowers in the town?" Raven's player asks. "There's no way I'm getting off the FAV and into a good sniper spot, is there?" The GM chuckles. "Okay, fine," she responds, "do I at least have time to look quickly down my scope and see if they have snipers set up or something?" "You'll have to be fast, you have like two seconds at most before the enemy opens up. So Taylor, give me **SP** vs., say, 8 to see if you get to decent enough cover in time. Raven, you have it harder, **PC** vs. 9, and that's only because you know where to look. In any case, you guys understand these goons have the initiative here, so they'll get the first shot. Everyone good?"

Other examples
We've used an assault (or an enemy ambush) as examples here, but this technique certainly isn't limited to straight-up fights. We can set up a variety of scenes this way. For examples, we need look no further than a few of the scenarios set up in the **Archetypes** chapter!

- In the Sapper's example scene, we established a farmhouse, where he was looking to set traps. The establishing shot was of the farmhouse and its various buildings and features, and of a Crimson Fist division in the distance, still a ways away. We ask, "So, what are you looking to do?" Leon the Sapper responds, "well, I'd like to set up some weapon emplacements, and maybe I can bum around the tool shed for parts for a zipline to connect the silos." Now we have a place to zoom in for the Action Phase! Once we figure out what the rest of the team is planning on, we can start with Leon's plan and the equipment he's setting up, and switch between perspectives to keep everyone in focus. The Fist attack itself is another scene altogether.
- In the Smooth Operator's splash text and example scene, we saw Jenna scoping out the scene, prying for details and a plan of attack. The establishing shot was the exterior of the triad bar, and the interior as a room or two, with restrooms to the side and a kitchen in back. We ask Jenna what her plan is, and she tells us she'd like to sit at the far end of the bar and observe the gang leader's movements for a little while, to see what approach she'd like to ply. Remember, we can ask for rolls during the Setup Phase! "Okay," the GM says, "give me a **Perception** roll. This isn't something new to you, and a normal person could handle it, so let's call it **PC** vs. 7." She rolls and hits with a 9. "As you watch, you see the bartender, a slender, curvy young woman in her early twenties, ask for the guy's order. '*Bacardi 151, on the rocks*', he says –" the GM replicating the husky, grizzled voice of our good lieutenant – "and as she turns to grab the bottle, he's very obviously gazing at her hips." "Aha!" Jenna's player exclaims, "a skirtchaser? I can handle that."
- In the Tactical Commander's splash text and example scene, we saw Bishop getting the lay of the land and giving orders to the team. The Tac/Com's *Tactical Analysis* ability is almost tailor-made for the setup phase, as it helps the team determine what their best approach is, and the team gets the immediate chance to capitalize on it and get set up. In fact, the entire example is a Setup Phase in its own right! We might zoom into the team's actions a little more – say, we ask Raven the Eagle Eye to make a **Perception** roll to find an ideal spot for a hide, or let Ramirez pre-emptively aim his heavy machine gun so he can open fire with a bonus in his very first turn. Whatever makes sense given the time and information they have.

Establishing connections in the Setup Phase
One of the sneakiest ways to make the story of your mission more compelling is to help players build connections with the major players! This can be done at character creation, of course, but when a new character is introduced in a Setup Phase, don't be afraid to point to a player and ask something like: "Ramirez, you and the Brigadier go back. Where do you know him from?" Players may want to jump in and create their own connections with NPCs as well; go with it! It's just another way to keep things interesting and give the team more buy-in to the story, since it's one that a player (a member of the script team!) helped craft at more than a surface level.

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Handling "flashbacks"

In the Setup Phase, you might find a player asking if they could have prepared something (typically some kind of item or trap) in advance. In many cases, that's exactly what the Setup Phase is for, presuming the team has (or would have had) the initiative and enough time. Say the team runs across a hallway to hide and prepare an ambush on a patrol they heard up ahead. The Sapper's player jumps in: "Wait, hold up, could I have set a mine in the hallway instead?" Of course he could have, they haven't shown up yet. Presuming everyone's okay with adjusting the plan a little bit, we can shift that around, but now's the time to make the roll for the mine. Presume nothing is set in stone until it's rolled for and the Action Phase starts.

If the setup would have been something that would have had to happen during or before a previous on-screen scene, though, or require information that would have been acquired after the flashback action would've happened (for example, Jenna having a knockout tablet in the example text from **The Smooth Operator** – she couldn't have known he wouldn't give up the key willingly until she saw him and analyzed his behavior, and the pill would have to have been prepared beforehand), it's a Creative Retcon, and costs a Badass Point, as well as whatever rolls would have been required at the time. Remember, though – if a roll to establish something for a Creative Retcon fails, and the "retcon" would provide no benefit, no Badass Point is spent. Just like you don't generally get something for nothing in *Measure of a Badass*, it's in poor sport to force the players to spend something for nothing.

Action Phase

The Action Phase is the meat of the game, where stuff gets done, cars get blown up, guns get fired, etc. The majority of the text in this manual is already devoted to what happens in the Action Phase, so instead of a simple play-by-play of what happens, here are a few "best practices", things to keep in mind as you play in order to stay in the spirit of *Badass* and keep the action (and the awesome) flowing.

- **When in doubt, say yes (or at least maybe).**
  Badass is all about over-the-top action. Archetypes run the gamut, from mostly practical (Soldier, Tactical Commander, Shadow to a certain extent), to unusual (Sapper and Gunslinger), to way outside the bounds of practicality (Weapon Master, Iron Hand, 1337 h4x0r). In the real world, it's a bonehead move to bring a sword to a gunfight, or try to take control of the enemy's tactical command plane while under fire from their troops. But in an action movie, the Weapon Master brings a sword to a gunfight and *wins,* and the h4x0r turns the enemy troops against each other and scatters their chain of command. Players will try to do off-the-wall things; encourage them! Rush the machine gunner as though he were a samurai; chop the tank shell in half. That's the awesome part; that's what we're here to do!

  That's not to say every wild and crazy action will succeed, but we at least owe the players a chance to try. Every character should be able to do things like this, especially if they're in their "wheelhouse" of Archetype and Boosts. If there's a semi-reasonable chance the action could succeed given what we've established about the character, let them attempt it. And don't forget, that advice goes just as much for the players' adversaries (particularly Elites and up) as it does the Badasses themselves!

- **Never, ever just shut a player down. Instead, say "yes, but".**
  Remember that a player's Archetype is the kind of thing they want to do – the kind of action they revel in and focus on. Characters won't always find themselves in a situation where they can put their skills into practice; sometimes the Wheelman isn't around a vehicle, or the Gunslinger gets disarmed. But when it is a character's time to shine, let them do it.

  As GM, you might find yourself in a situation where a player has been dominating a scenario with their skills; against a giant enemy mech, for example, the 1337 h4x0r's first instinct will almost certainly be to take control of it. "Wait, I can't let her do that, she'll win the battle in one roll", you might reasonably react, but *don't just block* – it takes the wind out of her sails entirely to say the thing is uncrackable, and she can't do the one thing she's here to do! That doesn't mean you have to lie down, though!

  Say "yes, but". ***Yes***, she can crack it, ***but*** only one component at a time; she can take control of the thing's fist and have it punch itself as it tries to fight the Badass team! *Or better still, ask her to create an opportunity!* Maybe the mech doesn't have a remote interface, so it can't be hacked directly, but it has to be programmable somehow, right? **Yes,** she can hack the mech, ***but*** she needs to get a physical wired connection to do it. What if the data port was on the back of the mech's head, and the h4x0r needs to climb onto the mech's back to get control! It doesn't get much more badass than that.

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- **Keep the drama constructive.**
  Some modern action cinema often deals with shades of gray. No one is ever sure who the good and bad guys are. The good guys gun down a roomful of hostiles only to find out the "hostiles" were on their side. The heroes are constantly tortured, with the question being how far they're willing to go to protect their sworn charge. We constantly see the dark side to lethal force. There are games that show this dramatic, gritty side of the action genre, and do it very well. *But this is not one of them.*

  This game really isn't about drama. We're here for the action, even if this singular focus stretches the story's credibility a little bit. Characterization is important, but don't forget: *we're here to see the player team kick ass in style*. If the enemy commander kidnapped Ramirez's daughter, cool, it's a neat hook. But don't put the heroes against an army of child soldiers, and have the daughter leading the charge. The players shouldn't have to think about whether what they're doing is right; conspiracy theories that involve the players' organization, schisms, split loyalties, and so forth are out of place. That kind of stuff is really cool, but it's for another game. *Don't set up situations where player characters point guns at each other.* And if the characters ever do, take a step back and ask the players, in no uncertain terms, whether it's going somewhere constructive, rather than the kind of infighting that will tear the game apart and lead to animosity between the players. If that doesn't work, call a break, and let cooler heads prevail. First and foremost, we're here to have fun. *Let's not screw up the fun in service to "acting in character".* There are more important things than that.

- **Tip your hand before you strike.**
  As GM, don't just blindside the players with pain that they couldn't have expected. (From personal experience, this ends up giving you a player group that checks under every rock and around every corner, and only takes action when they're positive they're safe – the kind of behavior you *don't* see in action movies!) Set up problems before they fall on the players' heads. For example, say you have an enemy sniper on a hillside a long way out. Don't just have him take the shot straight away and potentially wound a player without them having a chance to act – that's lame. Tip your hand first, remembering also your directive to explain honestly what the players see and hear: "Raven, out in the distance, on the hill, you catch a strange flash of light." This sets her player up; she can fire on it hoping it's a threat, use her scope or binoculars to investigate (obtain information), or take cover now and investigate later. If she tries any of these things and fails, or ignores the flash of light in favor of something else, the sniper takes his shot.

  Second, if the players don't act on your warning, or miss the roll to discover the problem, don't pull punches. Follow through on the threats you make, with the explicit understanding that Badass's rules prevent you from hosing them too badly, and prevent you from killing them at all (without their consent, anyway). Let's say Raven takes a knee and peers out through her own scope at the sniper, who's disguised in a ghillie suit, and misses the **Perception** vs. **Speed** roll to figure out it's a sniper and detect his position – the risk was that she'd be unprepared and subject to the sniper's fire: "As you scan the hillside, trying to figure out where that flash came from, suddenly a second flash comes – this time the muzzle flash of a rifle! Roll **Speed** - 2 for defense against the shot!"

- **Help the players earn Badass Points.**
  Technically, the players can earn an unlimited number of Badass Points, if the table is willing to vote for them. You might think this would end up with all the characters with Badass Points coming out of their ears, stomping everything that comes at them. But in practice, the opposite happens; they'll forget about them, or be too restrained in offering them up. Often, this is because the players haven't quite gotten into the over-the-top mindset of the game, and the action falls a little flat. When you find the team struggling to earn Badass Points, there are two ways to help them out:

  1) *Nominate the players yourself*, as GM, when you see something cool happening. If the players are already doing awesome stuff, but forgetting to award points for it, this is the way to go.
  2) When people are going through the motions, but nothing is really jumping out in characterization and description ("jumping across the room balletically", for example), *probe for details!* "Okay, you climb the wall, no problem! Describe it!" Or, "Awesome, you definitely nailed that guy. I imagine you didn't just punch him and he fell over, right? How did you take him down?"

  There are two purposes to this: first, it keeps things visceral (see below), encouraging vivid, engaging description, keeping the players focused on the action instead of the mechanics. Second, it gives the players currency to get their momentum up and running.

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- **Sometimes, you get Badass Points for spending Badass Points ("The Ouroboros Effect").**
  In a lot of cases, when attempting wild and crazy stunts to pull one over on their foes, players might miss rolls with high Target Numbers and spend Badass Points on success, only to immediately get nominated for another one, for zero net change. *There's nothing wrong with that.* By going out on a limb, the players make the game more exciting for everyone at the table; that's precisely the thing Badass Points are intended to encourage and reward. A crafty player might spend quite a few points, but end up with the same total throughout the mission. Nevertheless, he'll have made his mark, painting a hot streak throughout the mission, keeping everyone at the table on the edge of their seats! It might come across as a little unbalanced from a game design perspective, but ultimately, balance serves fun, not the other way around. If the game is fun, who cares about balance?

- **Keep things visceral.**
  If you've ever read a Tom Clancy novel (okay, maybe aside from *SSN*), you'll already be aware of the value of keeping the focus on visceral, what-happens-right-now action. It keeps everyone engaged. Clancy's writing style is not heavy on flowery, purple prose; everything is stated matter-of-factly, but at such a level of detail, and with such a fine chronological granularity, that the reader can clearly paint a picture in his mind of the circumstances at any given moment. It is very much like watching a movie. Done right, the flow of action in *Badass* mirrors this technique. If you're ever at a loss for details or how to proceed, break the wide brush stroke of the character's intent or scene's progression down in time – what is happening *right now*? What is happening in the next few seconds?

  Don't just punch a guy – have the baddie feint left before putting a meaty right cross into the hero's jaw! Why just jump a gap when you can sail, turning heads, tires screeching as they hit the pavement? The mark isn't just convinced of the Smooth Operator's story; he stops for a second, twists his mouth around a bit, eyes down in contemplation, before nodding slightly. When we're describing the here and now, more detail is always better than less. Not only does it keep the players' minds on the action, it encourages them to do the same, improving the experience for everyone.

- **Draw maps like crazy!**
  Badass does not make a one-to-one distinction between the **Speed** stat and the distance a character can move in a turn. Given that the action in Badass doesn't rely on distances measured in feet or meters, extra granularity and definition would be lost. That said, combat changes rapidly, and as fighters circle, duck into cover or through doors, or leap from balconies, keeping everyone's positions and states straight in every player's mind is a difficult task. A visual medium that everyone can see helps players keep their bearings. For that purpose, I recommend a small to medium dry-erase board or mat. Using markings like a character's initial (their name, their character's name, or an abbreviation for their archetype – SO, 1H, GS, etc.), alongside X marks for the enemies, everyone's general position and tactical situation can be represented, and then subsequently changed with little effort. Questions about available cover or high ground, the presence of trees, water, catwalks can all be answered with quick adjustments to the map.

  Inside a building or other indoor space, hit the high points, but don't feel like you have to draw in every chair, potted plant, and so forth. I like to draw maps very abstractly, drawing walls and doors in sketchy lines in order to establish lines of fire for flanking or other tactical approaches; it's a thirty-seconds-or-less process, and I narrate what's visible about the scene as I go. I don't even *attempt* to use the map as a scale object to debate exactly how many meters the machine gunner can move during his turn; that's missing the point. It's a reference tool for a combat or other important scene. I'll then erase it and draw the next room when the team rounds a corner. If they go back, it's easy to redraw my previous map, since it was a quick process to begin with.

- **If you don't know the answer to a question, make something up.**
  Badass is a low-prep game by design. In many cases throughout the game, you'll be expected as GM to provide answers to questions, when you won't know the answer yourself. That's okay! When you find yourself faced with the 1337 h4x0r who obtains a satellite map, or a Tactical Commander who nails an analysis (or uses the *Fifty moves ahead* ability), or just questions from the team to their briefing officer at the start of the mission, by necessity there will be a lot of gaps in even your knowledge of how the mission will go. The correct way to handle this is a two-step process:

  1) Make something up
  2) Hold yourself to it

  As soon as you provide an answer to the players, take note of it – write it down, map it, whatever. That small part of the mission is now fixed in place. This is standard improv practice here; don't BS your players and give a non-answer. Just go with your gut, and improvise around the new facts. If you followed our advice in Mission Planning and didn't pre-plan a solution or path, it will fall naturally into place as the story continues.

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- **Use stats, Archetypes, and Boosts to make judgment calls.**
  Sometimes there are circumstances in-game where rolling to determine success doesn't make sense — something is more of a binary option. That is, either a character can do something or they can't. For example, let's say our Soldier wants to grab a discarded heavy machine gun from an overturned jeep and hip-fire it. That's ridiculous, but it's awesome (Rambo did it in the most recent *Rambo* film), so rather than reject it out of hand, what would it take? A character with **Strength** 0 or +1 really shouldn't have much of a chance — the gun weighs upward of 80 pounds! At this point, we could consult the character's stat directly and make a judgment call. Could a guy with **Strength** +3 (think along the lines of a professional strongman here, or an actor like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Jesse Ventura) pick up an eighty pound machine gun? Sure, although it would be a pretty arduous task to fire it with any degree of accuracy, especially since it's not designed to be fired on foot (no stock). Along a less ridiculous vein, a **Strength** score of +2 might allow you to use a sawed-off shotgun in one hand.

  Static checks of Core Abilities or Boosts can also come in handy. Obviously, a 1337 h4x0r will know a lot about a database just by making a cursory examination of it (by virtue of *RTFM*); the Weapon Master, on the other hand, may scarcely be able to tell the thing is a database (or the precise meaning of the word "database", presuming a mediocre **Aptitude** score). Similarly, a Smooth Operator may be able to tell through a little simple observation what method of persuasion a mark is particularly vulnerable to, while others would need to do some extra thinking. When making judgments like this, though, keep in mind the nature of characters in action movies — *in general, anyone can try to do something.* Heroes do all kinds of things that are way outside their job description. When in doubt, let someone attempt any task, but give extra benefits to someone who would have special knowledge or capability with the task at hand.

- **Sometimes disclaim decision making ("The Die of Fate").**
  Every now and again, you'll be called upon to make a decision that matters to the situation at hand, but lack the tools or knowledge to make that decision. The characters' abilities, the situation at hand, none of it tips your judgment one way or the other; essentially, the call you make is arbitrary. It's important not to accidentally gang up on the players (by always making the answer go against them), or on one player over another (by having things go in one player's favor more often, but against another's) – or for players to even have that perception. Some examples of these calls are whether a window exists in a room, or which of two equally-threatening targets an enemy will engage. In cases like this, simple randomization may be your best friend: assign results to equal swaths of a die and roll it. If you're choosing yes-no, or between two targets, the first is 1-5, the second 6-10. If you're choosing between three options, the first is 1-3, the second 4-6, the third 7-9, and reroll 10s. You get the idea. A little bit of applied game theory like this keeps the decisions from favoring one party over another in the long run.

- **Sometimes, even heroes get unlucky.**
  There's no doubt that players have bad streaks with the dice. We've all had those sessions where we can't roll anything higher than a 3. It's not incompetence on the player's part; he might be coming up with terrific tactical plans and making good decisions, and for whatever reason, the numbers just don't pan out for him that night. Why, then, should the GM turn around and mock the player for his tough luck? It strikes me as adding insult to injury. In action movies, problems arise from misfortune far more often than ineptitude.

  Rolls of natural 1 are automatic misses, *not* "botches"; strong misses aren't even "botches". *Badasses don't botch***.** The way I often perceive a 1, or a strong miss, on the dice, is that *the character was just as unlucky at that moment as the player!* Say a natural 1 shows up on a sneaking attempt; the character just happens to step on an unfortunately placed twig, or birds get startled by something unrelated and fly in front of his position, drawing the sentry's attention to the location. The narrative effect is the same, but instead reinforces the player character's narrative concept instead of undermining it.

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When to End the Action Phase

Scene pacing comes in here too – just like you start a scene when something interesting is about to happen, *the scene ends when something interesting has happened (or nothing interesting is happening).* When the major conflict of the scene is resolved, or the major goal is achieved (or found to be unachievable), the scene has served its purpose, and it's time to set up the next one.

This is true even if the setting of the new scene is the same as the scene that just resolved! The enemy force has been routed, and the players want to interrogate the survivors? Cool, let's focus on that, but it's a new scene. The Setup Phase of the interrogation gives the players all time to make a plan before someone jumps in and takes control of the action, and gives the GM time to quickly plan and figure out the survivor's motivation and what they're willing to talk about, what the players will need to force out of them, and what they'd sooner die than say.

You may be wondering – if a scene only begins when something interesting is about to happen, how could it ever end with nothing interesting happens? In a perfect world, it wouldn't, but some scenes are false starts. A fight is about to break out, or a chase about to start, when someone realizes a different or better approach, or the team realizes they're outmatched and need to retreat. They just walk off, say? Okay, the scene's over. Nothing got resolved, but that's okay! We can set up a new scene where action is going to happen after all.

Resolution Phase

The close of the Action Phase determines where the players are going next. If the players don't have a clear next step, ask them "where to now?" If they aren't sure, zoom out and establish the larger scope of the area of the mission – the enemy base, the city and greater area, etc. Then, take a look at the list of mission objectives; what's next? If the objective list isn't strictly ordered, ask the players what objective they want to tackle, and then establish the route (or routes!) available for them to take to get there.

The Resolution Phase is a good place to determine when to bring in a Setpiece. Review the list of Setpieces you've prepared for the mission; if one makes sense – that is, the players are on their way to it, or it is being brought to them – that's your next scene. Otherwise, it's time to make plans. Once we know now what the players' next plans are, decide what will await them when they get where they're going – or what will interrupt them on the way. It's easy to forget that the world isn't frozen in time, a backdrop for the players to tear through. Their enemies are a living, breathing, often well-managed force. They'll react differently if the player team runs roughshod through a facility, guns blazing, destroying everything in sight, versus carefully planning their movement and stealthily darting from place to place, engaging in combat only when necessary. And of course, the enemies have their own agenda too.

At the close of a scene, take a moment to think about how the situation may have escalated. Did the players' adversaries notice the team's actions? If so, determine how they may have reacted. Also, consider time. Do the players need a large amount of time to go to the location of the next scene, or did they end up stalling in the current one? If so, the enemy force may have had time to escalate or move forward with the plan – bringing the next step of the mission's dark fate to pass. In any case, don't let the momentum stall out; when the players look to you to see what happens next, bring the next "bang". Raise the stakes. Give the players a reason to investigate the next scene rather than just expecting them to guess. If the results of the Resolution Phase put the players in a bad spot or on the defensive (ambushed, intercepted, or just blundering into a well-defended position), bring that into the *Setup Phase* for the next scene – and remember that if there's a conflict, the enemies get the first turn!

Re-equipping

If the team has an extended period of downtime between scenes, or will be stopping at a safehouse or ally-controlled base, give the players the option to re-equip. They can swap out their gear however they like, as though they were Gearing Up at the start of the mission. Remember that they're still limited to the number of Gear Points they had at the start. Be generous with what the players can do; if the base they're going to lacks certain items, you should specify what's available before the players start changing out their equipment, but in general, err on the side of generosity.

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When the players are wiped out

An ally who is incapacitated can, of course, be healed through first aid and the Field Medic's surgery ability. However, if the character is incapacitated and abandoned, he is captured by the enemy, and reintroduced in a subsequent scene as an objective – his rescue. (See **Changing or Cancelling Objectives**, below, for more.) The character may be guarded by a contingent of mooks in a brig or other location, or be personally guarded by the mission's Boss!

If *all* of the protagonists are defeated, we have to go somewhere. In **Health and Injury,** we've established the player characters don't die (unless they willingly sacrifice themselves), but they can definitely get into bigger trouble! Therefore, the next scene begins with all of the protagonists stripped of their equipment and restored to at least one Health point, where their first objective is escaping their confinement by the enemy. The reintroduction could take many forms. Maybe the team is tied up as they're on a truck to the enemy's prison, or being interrogated in separate rooms by an Elite henchman. We could even design a Setpiece beforehand for just such an occasion, an overly-elaborate deathtrap for them to escape in the nick of time!

The time it takes for the team to get put in the enemy's holding facility, or strapped to the laser-equipped sharks, is a substantial chunk of time the rest of the enemy force can take moving forward with their plan! If we're at the end of the mission, and there's no time left, this could mean mission failure. More likely, though, it means the player team has lost a significant portion of their time advantage, and may have to hurry or curtail their plans to get the job done in time… or their job may have just gotten a lot harder as their adversaries fortify their positions and call in reinforcements!

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Using Task Objectives

Sometimes, a character (or the entire Badass team) sets out to accomplish a task too big for one roll. If a goal isn't something that can be accomplished in one step, using a single stat, it's useful to write down a set of objectives, one for each step in the process. Often, each step can be completed with one roll, but not necessarily – for example, obtaining an unusual component for a machine, like a rod of nuclear fuel, may entail an entire scene or even separate mini-mission! Furthermore, some objectives are accomplished naturally in the process of doing something else. In any case, the objectives set up are a set of conditions *necessary and sufficient* to accomplish the task at hand. That is, once each objective is accomplished, the goal is achieved, and without accomplishing an objective, the goal remains out of reach.

Example: The Crimson Fist is working on crunching firing solutions for a captured ballistic missile against major cities in North America. Once it's programmed, they plan on using it through a sock-puppet government in Edonia as a bargaining chip for financial ransom. If the team can destroy the computers performing the calculation, the missile will be dead weight. The team has inflitrated the Edonian missile facility and located its high-speed computation center.

Aleph-null, the 1337 h4x0r, wants to activate the halon suppression system in an enemy computer room to force the personnel out, so that Leon the Sapper can sneak in and destroy the machines physically. Obviously, this isn't a one-step process, so once they decide on their course of action, the GM takes a card and writes down the steps.

***Goal**: Destroy the Edonian supercomputer room*

- Determine the encryption algorithm used for transmission
- Crack the network's security
- Locate and enable the halon system on the network
- Gain physical access to the computer room
- Physically destroy or disable the computers

Once the team completes the objectives on the card, the goal is achieved, with all the appropriate ramifications. However, if one of these tasks is failed or proves to be impossible, the team might need to alter their approach, or may not be able to accomplish the goal at all.

Changing or Cancelling Objectives

In certain cases, either by missing rolls or through prevailing circumstances, an objective (whether related to the mission or a smaller goal) may no longer make sense. There are two potential results when this happens:

- If there's still another way to accomplish the goal, a new objective (or list of objectives!) may replace the cancelled one. If, say, an enemy hacker locks out Aleph's access to the halon system, her team might have to try another method to deal with the enemy personnel inside the computer room. It's different, and probably harder, but the goal of destroying the computers is still feasible.
- If the goal is made irrelevant or impossible, the card is taken off the table; the stated goal is cancelled and cannot be achieved, even if other objectives on the card are accomplished. If the enemy backs up the data on the computers to another facility, or the data is no longer necessary, its purpose achieved, there's no longer any reason to break into the system, so the card is taken out of play.

Updating mission objectives

It's a fact of life in action cinema that the team's briefing and intelligence is often incomplete, or even faulty. Mission objectives will change, or new objectives might appear, as new information comes to light. When the team achieves the goal of "Investigate the enemy arms buildup", they might discover that the arms are being used for an imminent invasion of a neighboring city, involving the construction of a superweapon. When this happens, the GM might introduce new objectives to the mission: "Prevent the ambush" and "Destroy or disable the Neuralizer Mk VII", say. If the players destroy the Neuralizer but fail to head off the ambush, the objective might change to "Repel the enemy troops from the city".

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Threat Points

You didn't think the heroes got to have all the fun, did you? A smart villain always has another trick up their sleeve. To that end, the GM has a tool to reinforce the Badasses' opposition: *Threat Points*. There are two kinds: Pool and Enemy. They do similar things, but are spent different ways.

Pool Threat Points

At the start of each mission, the GM begins play with a pool of Threat Points equal to **the number of players plus 2.** In a 3-player game, the GM gets 5 points; with 4 players, 6 points; and so on. These Threat Points do not replenish at any point; they can be a good way to manage the intensity of a mission. By spending them evenly throughout the session, you have a good gauge of progress and a feel for when the mission should end; by spending several early on, you have an exciting first reel, followed by a slow build to an ultimate climax; and by saving them up for the end scenario, you set the scene for a violent, no-holds-barred throwdown with the mission's final adversary. Both Pool and Enemy Threat Points are a useful pacing tool; use them to help gently guide the mission the way you want the players to experience it.

The GM may spend one Pool Threat Point at any time to:

- Introduce a complication, or enemy reinforcements during a combat, that aren't triggered by a missed roll on a character's action or through character inaction.
- Use any benefit from "Enemy Threat Points" on an enemy that has no Threat Points left to spend. Enemy Threat Points may *not* be used on Mook or Tough enemies.

Introducing complications

It's important to understand the difference between obstacles players encounter through the typical flow of a mission and the kind of complication that requires a Threat Point. Read too broadly, you might think that putting anything in the Badasses' path costs a Threat Point; that's not the case. We've talked at length about tipping your hand as a GM before you strike. Give the players an indication that something is wrong before things go badly: the bridge is rusty and could break at any time, or the enemy Tactical Commander is on the radio calling for reinforcements, et cetera. By spending a Threat Point, you gain the ability to have the bridge that looked stable break, or to have an enemy patrol blunder into the path of the team already engaged in combat with another enemy squad.

In any case, make the complication something that's problematic, but from which the players can recover. The bridge beam snaps under the character's legs, and now they're holding on for dear life with a rushing river and jagged rocks below, but they can still pull themselves up or control their dive. The enemy patrol walks in, but they don't just attack straight away; the players can deal with them before they deliver pain. Have an unexpected disaster occur, but *stop short of it causing irreparable harm* to the players (unless they fail to deal with this new problem).

Enemy Threat Points

Individual enemies can also carry Threat Points when they come into play. They're potent adversaries, and in keeping with that, Threat Points give them abilities to match:

- **Elite** enemies get 1 Threat Point,
- **Boss** enemies get 3,
- and **Masterminds** get 5.

Enemy's Threat Points work similarly to, but *not the same as*, player Badass Points; the list of benefits they provide is different. An enemy may spend one Enemy Threat Point to:

- Take an action at any time, including interrupting another character's action in progress.
- Inflict 50% bonus damage on a successful hit (but only if they aren't already getting bonus damage from a strong hit or a Boost).
- Use an attack with a Level of 6 or 7.
    - Weapons of a level higher than 7 cost 1 additional Threat Point per two additional levels. (i.e. Level 8 or 9 weapons cost 2 TP, 10 or 11 cost 3 TP, etc.)

Important: Enemies *cannot* spend Threat Points to improve their rolls' result. They also cannot declare and use a narrative detail; those unexpected problems must be purchased using Pool Threat.

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Designing and Using Enemies

The player team will face off against *many* enemies in the course of a mission. It's important to be able to quickly generate hordes of foes; since pacing is so crucial in *Measure of a Badass*, having them ready to go is a great idea. Enemies have three important characteristics:

- Enemy type (Mook, Tough, Elite, Boss, Master)
- Stats and gear
- Tactics and style

Enemy Types

There are five types of enemies that appear in *Badass.* The enemy types represent the importance of an enemy to the story. The stronger and more important the foe, the better his stats, abilities, and often equipment are.

- *Mooks*: The hordes of faceless goons the players are responsible for facing down. These characters appear long enough to be defeated, routed, or killed by the player team, and they're mainly remembered for how they die. ("Ramirez just annihilates like twenty of those guys with nothing but a handgun – man, that was awesome!")
- *Toughs*: More resilient mooks. These guys actually put up a fight, and occupy more than five seconds of screen time, but still die just the same. They're mainly remembered for the interlude they're involved in, not so much for their own prowess. ("So Aleph is ducking around the train car trying to find the satellite terminal, and those ninjas are crawling through the vents trying to corner her – then she finds a barrel of nitrogen or something in a chem lab and freezes them solid.") If they have a name, it's forgettable.
- *Elites:* Stronger enemies matching the players' strengths, providing a real contest. People remember these guys by what they do. ("Hey, remember Kiresao's henchmen, what's-their-names, Curly and Burly, the big guys with the machine guns on the train?") They'll have names, but sometimes people will forget them and call them "that one guy".
- *Bosses:* The big guy in charge of things. This could be a henchman, personal elite guard, or the leader himself. This guy has a name – have him show up and represent himself well, especially in the final scene. ("Daimyo Kiresao was amazing, acting meek until you least expected it, and then *bam*, a sword in your throat. I'm still not sure why Ramirez left her alive; it's going to be twice as bad when she shows up next time.")
- *Masterminds*: The final enemy of either a story arc or the story itself – the final, primary antagonist whose defeat will change the status quo. He (or it!) should not be a pushover; the players should have to steel themselves to defeat him. He is often preceded or accompanied by several lesser foes. ("You'd know Brigadier Stirkin built himself a freaking robot suit! Full-bore, too, with lasers, missiles, inch-thick armor plate, the whole nine yards. So here's the heroes, bouncing around the room, dodging hellfire from every direction, and just when they knock out one weapon, he pulls out another…") In some cases, the figurehead antagonist is a pushover; in that case, use the Mastermind template for the team's true opponent in the climactic battle encounter.

Mook

Mooks are faceless. They show up and then die, going down with one decent hit. They're best described in groups; "Northwest Expeditionary Force Infantry", for example, or "Crimson Tengu Scouts". They're throwaways, like bullets to be fired at the players, and they usually miss. Players will usually emerge unscathed from battles with mooks, and can handle being outnumbered as much as three to one with little problem. If the players figure out a way to deal with Mook enemies other than attacking them (hacking them, disabling systems, negotiation, etc.), one roll should do the job. This is *not* true of heavier foes!

Mooks have:

- Stats totaling -1 to +2. If you're throwing out a big squad of Mooks and want to create them as quickly as possible, just give them 0 in everything.
- One Health point
- Resistance = 1. A single hit that penetrates their armor takes them out.
- No Boosts
- Gear at the current mission's Gear Point total (usually one primary weapon and one or two backup weapons, possibly armor)

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Example Mooks

Mook Type	*Stats*				*Equipment Suggestions*
	ST	***SP****	***PC***	***AP***	
Average Joe	0	0	0	0	Whatever gear makes sense; usually light armor, but sometimes heavy
Slow and heavy	+1	0 (0)	0	0	Shotguns, magnums, or assault rifles; explosives; heavy armor
Bruiser	+2	0	-1	0	Heavy CQC weapons, shotguns or magnums, no or light armor
Agile	0	+1	0	0	SMGs, pistols, rifles/sniper rifles, light armor
Sharpshooter	0	0	+1	0	Sniper or assault rifles, light or heavy armor, possibly camouflage

* The value in parentheses is Load.

Tough

Toughs are more resilient, more dangerous mooks – foes that put up some kind of a threat and can take more than one blow, but are still not that dangerous individually. They're described impersonally, but with more detail, like "Northwest Expeditionary Force Support Gunner". If they have a name, it's forgettable.

Toughs have:

- Stats totaling +3 to +5
- One Health point
- Resistance = 10 + 5 x **ST**. This typically gives them higher Resistance than players, but they're still vulnerable to death from a single solid hit.
- Optionally one or two Boosts
- Gear at the current mission's Gear Point total, maybe plus a point or two

Tough Type	*Stats*				*Boost(s)*	*Equipment Suggestions*
	ST	***SP****	***PC***	***AP***		
Thug	+2	0	+1	0	--	Shotgun, magnum, heavy or improvised CQC, often armor
Tactical	0	+1 (1)	+1	+2	Danger sense / supporter	Rifle, SMG, pistol, some kind of grenade, knife / light CQC or Taser, light or heavy armor
Sniper	0	+1	+2	+1	Longarm marksman	Rifle, pistol, smoke grenades, concealable or light armor, camouflage, claymores or some other trap
Gunner	+1	0 (0)	+2	0	Volume of fire / Heavy weapons expert	One of assault rifle, assault shotgun, LMG, RPG, grenade launcher; pistol or rifle; HE/frag grenades or underbarrel grenade launcher; heavy CQC; heavy armor
Defender	+2	+1 (0)	0	0	Guardian	Magnum or SMG, riot shield, pistol, heavy armor
Tengu	0	+2	+1	+1	Acrobat / Stealthy	Silenced SMG or rifle, throwing knives, specialty grenades, katana/claw, nightvision goggles, grapple gun, concealable or light armor
Bodyguard	+1	+1	+1	+1	Guardian / Never stop moving	SMG or shotgun, magnum or pistol , CQC weapons, light armor

* The value in parentheses is Load.

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Elite

Elites are a bigger concern. These units have distinct specialties, are often squad leaders or *uniquely* tough individuals, and put up a solid fight – you can almost think of them, with allies, as "mini-bosses". They're characters of moderate importance, and often have names. Players can handle a one-to-one fight with Elites and come out successful, but will often suffer injuries in the process.

Elites have:

- Stats totaling +4 to +6
- 2-3 Health points
- Resistance = 8 + 3 x **ST** (like player Badasses)
- The Core Abilities of one Archetype, possibly plus one Evolution
- Gear at the current mission's Gear Point total, plus two points
- 2-3 Boosts
- 1 Threat Point

No examples are provided here, because really, elites should be unique, or close to it. They have enough staying power and abilities to become memorable in their own right; almost think of them like mini-player characters in terms of customization and depth.

Boss

The Boss is the single strongest enemy in the mission. Their stats make it tough for players to crack them, and they carry their own style and abilities. Bosses have names, like "Daimyo Kiresao, commander of the Crimson Tengu" or "Col. Greg Hereford, commanding officer of the Northwest Expeditionary Force", and they're generally people in positions of authority. While a Badass squad will usually prevail against a Boss in isolation, Bosses usually are smart enough to bring backup with them. Well-reinforced, the players will have a difficult time, unless the enemy force accompanying the Boss comes in several waves.

Bosses have:

- Stats totaling +5 to +7
- 3 or 4 Health points
- Resistance = 8 + 3 x **ST** (like player Badasses)
- The Core Abilities of one Archetype, plus 1-2 Evolutions
- Any equipment at all
- 3 or 4 Boosts
- 3 Threat Points

A mission should only contain a single Boss character, unless it contains a Mastermind (see following). Really think about this character, because it's your main antagonist throughout the session. They're calling the shots, and their desires and MO have been established via your mission plan – what would they do, and how would they engage? What do they bring to the table to make their appearance count?

Mastermind

The Mastermind is the final foe. With access to just about any tactic or piece of gear imaginable, the player team has reason to be afraid. The Mastermind can easily match a player squad in isolation, so use caution when combining a Mastermind with additional opposition. A Mastermind should only appear at the culmination of a full story arc, in place of a Boss. They're not really appropriate for a one-shot session.

Masterminds have:

- Stats totaling +8 or potentially higher (about 4-5 more than the players) – and their stats can go above +4. Use very high stats with care; with Masterminds having other benefits, you might end up with rolls the players can't help but strong miss every time!
- Resistance = 8 + 3 x **ST** (like player Badasses)
- Five or more Health points. These Health points should involve multiple phases of a fight – for example, an armored suit, or a hidden power unleashed as the Mastermind is injured. (See **Phased Battles**, below.)
- The Core Abilities of any of the Archetypes, relevant to the Mastermind's expertise
- Any equipment at all
- 4+ Boosts
- 5 Threat Points

Examples of Boss and Mastermind-class enemies will follow below, but we have a few other things to talk about first.

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Tactics and Style

Let's compare two example Mook types.

Blue Lotus Triad Thug
ST 0 **SP** 0 **PC** 0 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Equipment: Light armor, Submachine gun, Pistol

Panoptic Corporation Security
ST 0 **SP** 0 **PC** 0 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Equipment: Light armor, Submachine gun, Pistol

These two opponents look like exactly the same thing with two different names. And so far, that's true. What differentiates them is in their tactics and style of engagement.

Let's start with the thug. He's your basic banger working for a Hong Kong Triad. He's probably packing hand-me-down equipment, purchased from some third-rate gun runner; his SMG is an old, beaten-up Uzi, and the pistol is a .380-caliber Kel-tec piece of crap you can buy at a less reputable dealer for $250 brand new. He's got minimal training, and his main job is to provide muscle, or talk a big game and be a show of force. In a squad, he's not likely to utilize any coordination or squad tactics at all, and when the going gets tough, he's more likely to get out than get going.

On the other hand, the Panoptic Corporation's security team does not mess around. Panoptic is deeply in the pocket of the Crimson Fist, and provides logistic and financial services for operations, gear, and dollar amounts that would boggle the mind, so they have to run an *extremely* tight ship. It's very much a shoot first, ask questions eventually sort of operation. Panoptic's equipment is top of the line (UMP40s and P30s) and laden with sights and accessories. They train heavily, and operate like a well-oiled machine, using hand signals and squad entry tactics, and work together to suppress, flank, and outmaneuver opponents.

When working in a quick, improvisational style, summing the important information up into a few words is helpful, since it provides the meat of what we're going for at a glance. For each enemy, sum up their typical actions and tactical choices into a couple of bullet points; these are the choices those enemies are going to make during the fight. So, completing the descriptions above:

Blue Lotus Triad Thug
ST 0 **SP** 0 **PC** 0 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Equipment: Light armor, Submachine gun, Pistol
Goal: Show enemies why they should fear the Blue Lotus
Tactics:

- Posture when threatened
- Attack relentlessly, without regard to teamwork or tactics
- Turn tail at the first sign of being outnumbered or outgunned

Panoptic Corporation Security
ST 0 **SP** 0 **PC** 0 **AP** 0
Health 1 Resist 1
Equipment: Light armor, Submachine gun, Pistol
Goal: Deny passage, detain or kill anyone who finds out Panoptic's secrets
Tactics:

- Ambush from multiple angles
- Fire and maneuver as a team
- When outmatched or at a disadvantage, make a coordinated retreat and call for backup

Using tactics choices

Enemies should act in a coordinated manner (at least, as coordinated as they would normally be); don't think of enemy actions in isolation. They're a team, and they should act like one. It's helpful, then, to think of what the group as a whole is trying to achieve, their goal in the encounter, and making tactical choices for the group as a whole before taking actions. At the beginning of each enemy turn:

- Examine the goals of all enemies in the fight. Determine whether they can be achieved right now; if so, the enemy will make an aggressive move. If they need to make an opening to move forward, they may go on the defensive; if their goal is impossible, they may retreat or surrender, based on their tactics.
- Pick a tactic for each enemy or group from the list. That's what you'll attempt to execute with that enemy this turn. Decide them all before you have any of the enemies act.
- One by one, take and describe the enemies' actions, rolling for each and determining the tactical situation for the players, the same way the players take, describe, and roll their actions.
- Repeat this process each turn, re-evaluating and picking the tactics that make the most sense for the enemy's goals.

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Phased Battles

The *wrong* way to go about Boss or Mastermind battles is to have a villain who inexplicably has the ability to shake off a few dozen hits and still run around. Having the guy just trudge around the same battlefield, clutching his assault rifle the whole time, blazing away as he takes wound after wound gets old fast – nothing is more boring than a fight against a wall of hit points. Instead, having something fundamental change each time or two the Boss gets injured makes things much, much more exciting.

Video games are *sometimes* a good example of this done well – consider the fights with Liquid Snake in *Metal Gear Solid*. First, he shows up in an attack chopper, firing autocannon blasts and missiles at the hero; later, he pilots a mech suit (Metal Gear Rex), engages in an unarmed confrontation on top of a bombed-out tank, and finally chases the player down in a Jeep. In each case, the villain changes what he does, what attacks he brings to bear, and the battlefield he fights on. Incidentally, if you've played the game, you might remember that those phases aren't all consecutive – the helicopter battle happens comparatively early in the game, while the rest are the final battles. No problem doing it that way either – having the villain retreat when he's wounded and show up when he has the advantage again makes a lot of sense. (The *wrong* way to do a Boss battle is in the style of a computer MMORPG game, where a boss just has something ridiculous like 22,000,000 HP for no other reason than to be able to hold off a team of twenty, and might change tactics once.)

A game of *Measure of a Badass* I played in saw our team chase down the Mastermind of a terrorist takeover of Washington, D.C. by catching up to him in armored Humvees, ultimately shooting the tires and disabling the vehicle. My Tactical Commander stunned the guy with a well-timed flashbang, and our Sapper planted an explosive charge on the car, catching him in the blast. At this point, he'd only lost three Health points! We narrated our team walking triumphantly down the tunnels, sweat, blood, and dust marking our passage, when suddenly he jumped into a drilling machine and chased us through subway wall after subway wall in a running battle. At the end, only one Health remaining, he activated a suicide bomb, and our Smooth Operator convinced him that he had failed, but fought well, and to just give up, stop killing, and accept an honorable death as the timer on his vest ticked down.

If these examples are any indication, in a climactic, session- or arc-ending fight, don't be afraid to strain credibility quite a bit if it leads to a more epic finale; keep the players on the edge of their seats throughout, and their astonishment will be at the tenacity of their foe, instead of at the drudgery of having to deliver hit after hit in an encounter they've already proven they've won.

Enemies and Special Abilities

There are a few abilities and Boosts that make more sense for the player characters than they do for enemies. Rather than close them off to GM characters, here are some examples of Boosts that need some tweaks to work well in those characters' hands.

- *Danger sense* (Tactical Commander): Give the character an extra chance to make an **Aptitude** or **Perception** roll to avoid a trap. If they hit the roll, they don't just charge headlong through it unharmed; instead, they'll make plans to disable, avoid, or negate it.
- *Fifty moves ahead* (Tactical Commander): Ask the player to tell you honestly what his plans are for the next couple of turns, given the current circumstances, and have your character act and order his forces accordingly. If a player angles and lies to you, have a discussion with them after the game. Remember how *Badass* works: the GM will play an open, honest game, and the players are expected to follow suit.
- *Player* (Smooth Operator): Under no circumstances should you tell a player what their character does. To that end, when an enemy character uses *Player* against a Badass who is attracted to that gender (establish this when it comes up in play), make sure to point out the character's physical characteristics and subtle movements. Take the +2 whenever the player character is intrigued or captivated by the persuader's beauty.
- *Crazy eyes*: Same principle. If a GM character successfully intimidates a player Badass, charge disadvantage to actions that would require them to overcome that fear.
- *The Look* (Smooth Operator): Again, same thing. Rather than force a player character to comply with their persuader's wishes, charge them disadvantage penalties to act against them – or spin the situation to make it advantageous to do so (or at least *appear* advantageous)!

Always remember that *Measure of a Badass* plays better with an open hand. If an enemy character has a special ability and uses it, feel free to point out what he's doing with the requisite description, but also make sure to name-drop the ability they used; it sounds bunk to say "your character is captivated by Allison's beauty, so you take -2" without also mentioning she used *Player*.

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Example Boss and Mastermind

Let's introduce the stats and game mechanics behind a couple characters we've brought up elsewhere: Daimyo Kiresao, a Boss enemy, and Brigadier Stirkin in his specially-crafted battle mech suit.

Daimyo Kiresao

Boss

ST	+1	Health	4
SP	+3	Resist	11
PC	+2	AR	2
AP	+1	TP	3

Light armor (AR 2)

Core:	*Shadow*
Evolution:	*The Look*
Boosts:	Piercing sight, Assassin, Dodge bullets, Trustworthy face

Katana	(**ST**/**SP**, dmg 7)
PDW	(**PC**, dmg 7, Short, Auto)
Marksman rifle	(**PC**, dmg 8, Long)
Flashbangs	(**SP**, Short, Stun, Radius, Limited)
Teargas grenades	(**SP**, Short, Distraction, Radius, Quiet, Limited)

Gadgets: Suppressors, sneaking suit, grapple gun, directional mines

Tactics:

- Blend into the shadows and set a trap
- Make a surprise attack against an exposed target
- Make a coordinated attack with allies

Daimyo Kiresao appears with a team of Crimson Tengu. When her Health reaches 2, a fireteam of Crimson Fist Gunners joins the fight.

Brigadier Stirkin (in battle suit)

Mastermind

ST	+0	Health	5
SP	+2	Resist	8 / 12
PC	+2	AR	0 / 7
AP	+4	TP	5

None, or Battle Suit Plating (AR 7)

Core:	Tactical Commander
Evolutions:	Sweet ride (battle suit) I've got a guy
Boosts:	Collateral damage, Fifty moves ahead, Firewall, Volume of fire

Gatling machine gun	(**PC**, dmg 11, Long, Autofire)
Flak cannon	(**PC**, dmg 10, Short, Autofire, Spreading)
Stomp	(**SP**, dmg 14)
Spread missile pod	(**PC**, dmg 12, Long, Homing, Spreading, 1 TP)
Railbeam	(**PC**, dmg 13, Extreme, Spreading, Piercing, 1 TP)

(Piercing: penetrates walls or heavy cover, ignores armor)

Gadgets: Jump jets, thermoptic camera (sees through walls)

Tactics:

- Blaze away at groups with machine gun or flak cannon
- Stomp on exposed targets who get too close
- Use railbeam or missiles to strike foes in heavy cover
- Try to counter a hacking attempt

At first, Stirkin only uses the machine gun, stomp, and missiles; he'll be aggressive and make little effort to stay protected. When his Health reaches 4, he begins to use the flak cannon. When his Health reaches 2, he plays more conservatively, moving frequently to stay in defensive positions and firing the charge beam through walls or missiles around corners. When his Health is depleted, he will surrender and offer information about the Commandant in a plea for his life.

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Force Parity and Difficulty Tuning

"Balancing" encounters is a misleading term; some fights are naturally going to be harder or easier than others depending on circumstances. In terms of storytelling, it's better to mix up easy and hard fights than give the players group after group of enemies that match them perfectly. Determining who has the sheer numerical edge, called "force parity", is a helpful tool – but not the only tool – to use when determining the rough challenge of a combat encounter. Unlike real life, enemies have vastly different capabilities dependent on their importance to the story, reflected in their type – Mook, Tough, Elite, Boss, or Mastermind. As a general gauge, use these values to determine how many players each enemy type is "worth":

Enemy type	*Parity value*
Mook	1/4
Tough	3/4 to 1
Elite	1 to 1-1/2
Boss	2
Mastermind	3 to 4

Total the Parity value of all enemies in a fight – the difference between the enemy's total Force Parity and the number of player characters will give you a rough idea of a fight's challenge:

If the enemy parity is...	*Then a fight will be…*
half the number of players	Trivial
slightly lower	Easy
about equal	Moderate
slightly higher	Challenging
1 ½ times the number of players	Very difficult

Really, I bring this up less in the hopes that you'll use it to balance encounters in advance, so much as to illustrate what a party of Badasses can handle. As the charts show, Mooks are *extremely* weak. A party of twelve Mooks presents about an average challenge to a player party of four, if they're not concentrating their fire. They're really only effective en masse, or with backup from Toughs or Elites. Err on the side of having too much opposition, especially when dealing with squads of Mooks. If the players get overwhelmed and wiped out, the mission will continue regardless, since the rules specifically prevent you from killing them or harming them in some deprotagonizing way; all that happens is that the mission gets more interesting.

Force multipliers: Vehicles, weapons, and tactical considerations

Parity value doesn't necessarily tell the whole story. The value presented here presumes that the players and enemies are on foot, and all within each other's effective range. If a combatant can't bring his or her weapon to bear, they're "worth" less; if they have an especially dangerous weapon, or they're riding in a vehicle that reinforces them, they'll be "worth" more. Furthermore, tactical positioning makes a big difference. Having effective cover, the high ground, the element of surprise, or flanking, when your opponents don't share the same advantages, are big helps. Area denial weapons like machine guns, grenades and grenade launchers, and flamethrowers give you more bang for your buck.

All of these benefits, and anything else that might make one side more effective than it would normally be, are called "force multipliers" in military parlance. Don't forget them when setting up a fight – if you're looking for a tough fight, a few, heavily entrenched, well armed troops may be tougher to handle than a human wave of a dozen or more. Interesting environments and tactical considerations are often much more exciting to bring to bear than sheer numbers.

The takeaway

The advice I've just given on Force Parity should remind you of a point that keeps showing up in this manual: really, Badasses can handle just about anything. Badass Points are a huge benefit, and they can turn the tide in almost any situation. If you find yourself unsure of whether a fight, challenge or Target Number, or whatever else will be too hard for the team to handle, you've probably hit the right power level. Aim for "I'm not sure they'll be able to do this", rather than "They'll never make it past this". It's a fine line to tread where the players feel challenged without the tone becoming adversarial, but the closer you can get to that line, without falling over, the more exhilarating the session, and its resolution, will become. Never forget that you're only one person as GM, and there is a team of highly competent hero players looking to thwart you. Don't be afraid to take any edge you can get within the bounds of fairness and being a fan of the players and their characters.

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PART THREE
Special Play Modes

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Improvisational Mission Planning (Scene-by-scene in play)

POP QUIZ, HOT SHOT. It's 6:00 pm, game night, and your regular GM caught a bad cold. Now the players look to you, and they want to play Measure of a Badass. They have good taste! But how the heck are you supposed to run a game on the fly with no mission plan? It's time to go; you don't have an hour to put something together. (Or, if you're anything like me, you're just really bad at planning and operate better in the moment.) WHAT DO YOU DO?

Good news: the moving parts of a Badass mission are simple enough that it only takes a couple of minutes to create a new scene on the fly! While you may not be able to think of potential plans and consequences in advance, one advantage that the improvisational GM has over one with a plan is freer liberty to follow the players' actions wherever they may lead. In any case, building a mission on the fly is surprisingly simple.

Step 1: Bare minimum effort – mission concept and the boss

Without an idea of the starting point, it's hard to get anywhere. With no briefing or established goals, the players are going to have no idea what characters to bring. So unfortunately, you do have to put in a very small amount of effort up front. At minimum, you'll need a mission concept (and the objectives that come with it), and the boss or main antagonist of the mission. If you don't have a mission concept, either ask the players what they'd like to play, or look through your local action movie library and see if there's something you'd like to borrow from! (Remember, tropes aren't bad – they exist for a reason!)

Next, build the antagonist. This is just the standard process of building a Boss or Mastermind enemy (if this is the culmination of an arc). If you get any ideas for an elite group of enemies, or a henchman, it doesn't hurt to build them too, just to have an idea of what you can break out when the time arises. While you're doing this, think about why the antagonist would bring the mission's dark fate to pass. This gives you the ability to improvise their villain monologue, should the need arise, but also how desperate the Boss will be if the players start to win (which they almost certainly will). Putting a little thought into this now will make your job a lot easier and more believable later.

If you can think of a last scene – a final fight, race against time, or last-minute disaster to avert, given the Boss and their motivation, it doesn't hurt to write that down too, so that you can know where to eventually lead the players, but this isn't required to get the mission off the ground.

Step 2: Plan scenes based on the ending of the last scene

You've just finished a scene (or it's time to build the first scene) – great. Take five minutes, go get a refill on soda and popcorn, and think. This process is almost exactly like the Resolution Phase of traditional play, but you have a tiny bit more work to do. Since you don't have a pregenerated set of tools to build the next scene, you'll have to do a little bit more legwork, but that's what you signed up for as an improv GM, so less talk and let's rock.

Once you've figured out where the players are going next, based on the ending of the last scene, you know what's coming – time for the assault on the bridge, or the car chase away from pursuing enemy forces, or the interrogation scene. Now that you have a purpose for what puzzle pieces you need, it's a lot easier to build them. Since you don't have a list of Setpieces, you'll have to come up with each scene individually, but if you take a minute to think, "What would be really awesome here?", you'll probably think of one! Here are a couple of tips to think of something focused:

- **What's the bang? What's the goal?** What's going to happen to get the players started? Give them a lead, an enemy patrol or ambush, or an obstacle to overcome. Is this the scene where they'll fulfill an objective? What's standing in their way?
- **Make it different from the last scene.** Pacing is important; giving the players the same scene over and over again (a series of fights on open terrain or in a 30x30 foot room, to borrow a stereotype) will bore them quickly. Come up with one unique thing – a piece of terrain, a foe, a complication – to make this scene in particular different from the last one. And remember, not every scene has to be a fight (see **Step 3**, next.)
- **Details.** You don't have a list of impressions, either, so think about engaging the players' senses. What do they see? Hear? Smell? Describe it up front; don't wait for someone to make a generic **Perception** roll. Give them a reason to be interested. Don't overdo it – if you can think of one or two things to point out, that's good enough.
- **Bring a list of names.** There are plenty of resources on the internet for generating a list of culture-specific names; don't be afraid to use one. Names are hard to come up with on the fly; don't end up with six guys named John Smith and Bob Robertson. Having a tool in front of you will lend more credibility to the characters you present.

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Step 3: Designing enemies on the fly

Is there a fight about to happen, or is there the potential for a fight to happen in this scene? If so, it's time to determine what enemies (if any) are present.

- **What group or unit is it?** Are they special in any way?
- **What's their mission?** Why are they there? To hunt the players and ambush or distract them? To provide armored reinforcement for other soldiers? To harass or shake down civilians, prisoners, or stragglers? To locate the players and report their position? To be a shield protecting something or someone valuable?
- **Do they have any special weapons, vehicles, gadgets, or skills for the job?** Write those down, and hand them out to the enemies.
- **Who's in charge? Is that person with them?** If so, build them as the focus of the scene, and design the lesser enemies to follow their lead. Otherwise, make a note of what their goals are.
- **Is there anyone supporting them?** Another unit in the area? A vehicle or helicopter? A scout/sniper team? Backup held in reserve in case they're needed?

When trying to determine what kind of enemy to build:

- *Are they someone with a name, who's uniquely awesome (or the singular focus of the scene), but isn't the Boss?* They're an Elite. Generally avoid putting too many Elites in a scene; one, two, or at most three, possibly backed up by lesser units. Build each Elite by hand – it's someone unique, right? Make them memorable.
- *Are they someone who's got some staying power, or is special in any way (or a squad of people with a cool gimmick)?* They're Tough(s). They have a little more durability; give them equipment or a Boost to match, and make a note of what they do in their tactics block.
- *Are they complete cannon fodder?* They're a Mook. Give them a weapon and armor, and have them follow the lead of whoever's in charge. They're tactics block will generally be "follow X's orders", "when outnumbered, surrender/go berserk/run", and such. If you have no enemies on the scene other than Mooks, at least build a Tough as a squad leader to differentiate them from a generic, faceless mass.

Once you have enough specific enemies to use, if you need to fill out the enemy roster for the fight they might be involved in, pad with Mooks. Give them a +1 in one stat and a -1 in another, or 0 in all four, a Boost, weapon and armor, and a gadget or two if they obviously need them (night vision goggles, grapples, and the like), and go. Try to match the mission's Gear Point total, but if you miss by a point in either direction, don't sweat it too much.

Reusing existing enemies

It makes sense that a particular Boss would have a standard set of soldiers, guards, muscle, etc. protecting them. Don't be afraid to reuse existing enemies you've built for earlier scenes if there are more around!

Secret GM trick: Leaving an enemy's Boosts blank

Here's a dirty little secret trick: even though an enemy has a certain number of Boosts depending on their type, you don't have to pick them all up front! If you can't think of enough to fill out the enemy's full complement, just leave a couple of blanks (seriously, write a blank in the enemy's stat area or card so you remember that you have them to use!), and if an idea comes up in play, fill it in! Say you think, "Wow, it'd be really useful if these cultists could dive into the path of an attack headed for their fearless leader," just write *Guardian* in the blank and go with it! You do at least have to pick the enemy's type, stats, and main weapon though.

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Troupe Play and Grunts

Jonathan Tweet and Mark Rein-Hagen developed a game in 1987 by the name of *Ars Magica.* It introduced a number of novel ideas in the field of roleplaying games, not the least of which was its unique rules on scene economy, the flow of time, and magic-casting rules the likes of which haven't been seen before or since, except, arguably, in White Wolf's *Mage: The Ascension*. The most relevant concept in relation to *Measure of a Badass*, though, is a play mode they referred to as "Troupe-Style Play".

Troupe Play involved the entire table in the collaborative creation of a story. There is a GM, but that role doesn't *necessarily* belong to the same person each mission. Each person kept a "stable" of characters, each of whom could be swapped in and out as the story demanded. If a magus needed to spend a season in his tower researching a new spell, that character was unavailable, but the player could be free to introduce another character (probably a Companion or a "Grog" – more on them in a moment) who could act in the player party. At no time was the same player playing more than one character actively in a scene. The extras faded into the background.

Recurring television series often find protagonists sharing the spotlight; some are stalwart heroes who appear every week, while others show up only every few missions as needed. *Badass*'s episodic nature lends itself well to Troupe Play; if a mission calls for a particular type of character, or for that matter, if a player wants to try something different, he can swap characters in and out between missions, with the previously mentioned caveat still in effect that only one of each Archetype can be in play in any given mission. It allows for a more complex interplay of party dynamics, lets the players explore the Archetypes a bit more, and just generally is a lot of fun.

The GM chair can rotate, as well; whether each player GMs a session or mission, or one GM stays put throughout the duration of each overarching plot (the dynamics of which I've already explained), it allows everyone to have a chance to play, and everyone to exert their creative muscle in the GM role.

Lastly, the "Grogs". *Ars Magica* defined three role types for player characters: the Magus, the spellcaster and researcher wizard who performs his art and hones his craft in isolation from the world; the Companion, a skilled ally who accompanies the Magi and acts as a liaison to the outside world; and the Grog, one of a shared pool of grunts who provides the raw muscle. This last role, Grogs, can apply equally well to Badass, but we call them *Grunts*. These are allied characters who can allow a player to fill in a role if for some reason his Badass is unavailable; perhaps they're incapacitated, or performing a task somewhere else. If a player wants to try this option out, here's how to create one:

Creating a Grunt

A Grunt is a soldier, a transient character who provides backup for the Badasses, but eventually falls to the wayside, though he may come up again in future episodes. He has none of the protections of the Badass; he can earn Badass Points, but he is very much at risk of death if he should be incapacitated or caught in traps (and, by extension, can't provide the benefits of the optional Sacrifice rule). He's built with the following characteristics:

- Stats totaling +3, assigned so that each stat is between -1 and +2
- Three Boosts
- Gear using the same number of Gear Points as other characters

A Grunt does *not* have:

- Core abilities
- Protection from death (or the ability to use Sacrifice)

A Grunt can show up at the player team's side at any point it makes sense, and drop out anytime by the same rule. This is a looser definition than you might think: the Grunt could join at the beginning of a mission or any scene in which the Badasses have access to their home base, of course; he could as easily be a POW trapped in an enemy prison as the Badasses explore a base, or an allied army soldier (US, UK, NATO, Russian, whichever), here to provide backup and some useful skill; or any other gap the player team needs filled in short order. When the Grunt needs to leave, if the scene doesn't break at a point where the team have access to their home base, the Grunt could just as easily have new orders, or return to their own mission. (Incidentally, this is an option intended to bring a player rapidly back into the action. If your players aren't comfortable building characters rapidly on the fly, you may wish to prepare a pool of Grunts before play starts, or consider leaving this option out of your game.)

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One-on-one Play

Measure of a Badass is fundamentally a team game. Characters are a bit narrow in their fields of expertise, so they depend on others to back them up. In addition, the Badass Point economy relies on having people there to catch awesome moments and reward them. For these reasons, it can be difficult to make the game work with only a single player.

Still, there are plenty of movies that star a lone protagonist (James Bond, Rambo, and plenty more.) If you want to play *Measure of a Badass* one-on-one, there are a couple of tweaks you can make to the game:

- Start the player out with one Evolution (and the stat point that comes with it) to give them a little more potency. Cross training is highly encouraged.
- Possibly give the player an extra Health point. Since they're alone, they'll take more punishment than a team would.
- Tailor the missions specifically to the character's Archetype (and Evolution Option). Throw curveballs regularly, but for example, if the character is playing a Sapper, don't send him into the front lines of a pitched military battle repeatedly (unless his concept is a combat engineer).
- Be generous with bonuses for strong hits, in particular granting follow-up attacks or bonus actions more regularly than you otherwise would.
- Be *especially* generous when granting Badass Points. Since there's no one else there to notice, the buck stops with you.
- Often, give the player NPC allies (perhaps one or a few Grunts as foils, or even NPC Badasses). There are a lot of missions that are very difficult to impossible to complete on your own, and every hero has at least one sidekick or foil that's around at least some of the time.

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Going Full Custom

Measure of a Badass's standard setting is a slightly post-modern, real world environment, such as you see in most mainstream action films of the past few decades. Some films, however, go a bit more fantastical by introducing things like aliens, zombies or other monsters, or pushing the time frame into the past or future. Badass's rule set is deliberately fast and loose, so adjustments for another setting aren't too tough. The two main things that will change from a mechanics perspective are equipment and enemies.

Custom Gear

Modifying the setting, or advancing the timeline, usually means new, fancier weapons, armor, or gadgets. In most cases, you can co-opt an existing item to stand in for the new device; the stats for an assault rifle work just as well when you call it an M95 Pulse Rifle, for example; similarly, a motion sensor-triggered mine would work largely the same as a Claymore, just with a different triggering mechanism. Some novel invention (or offbeat, modern weapon), however, might not fit neatly into one of the boxes in **Gearing Up**. Say a villain shows up with a tesla cannon or a fully-automatic mini-missile pistol, or a police officer shows up with a pepperball gun. In these cases, some modification is in order.

Custom weapons

Building and costing a weapon is largely a question of adjusting three things: Power, Range, and Tags. For the most part, we'll count the number of positive or negative "modifications" we make – some counting more than others – and set the weapon's Level accordingly. The base for cost calculations for CQC weapons is either a light weapon or unarmed strike (Power 4, Quiet); for ranged weapons, the base is a pistol (Power 4, Short range). These base weapons are Level 0. Modify this as follows:

- Power:
  - Level +1 for each +2 increase in Power.
  - Level -1 for weapons that inflict no damage.
- For ranged weapons, increasing their range to Long increases their Level by 1; to Extreme, 2.
- For weapon tags, use the grid below:

Tag	*Level*
Radius	+2
Stun	+2
Autofire	+2
Duration	+1
Continuous	+1*
Other positive tags	+1
Heavy	-1
Limited	-1
Reload	-2

* Free if weapon has Duration

If a weapon has multiple functions (like the Taser in the core list, or a bow with broadhead and grenade arrows), the weapon's Level is the highest of the totals. Since a character pays a cost in Gear Points equal to the highest-level weapon they take, it's essentially equivalent to the two functions being separate weapons in the same package. For the Taser, its ranged attack is Level 0 (-1 for no damage, +1 for Quiet, +2 for Stun, -2 for Reload), and its CQC attack is Level 1 (-1 for no damage, +2 for Stun); the resulting Level is 1. A compound bow normally runs Level 2; grenade arrows would be Level 4 (2 for Power 8, 2 for Radius — the fact that the arrows explode means this function is definitely *not* Quiet!), so the bow's Level becomes 4.

Custom armor

There really isn't a whole lot that can be adjusted for armor. Futuristic personal armor could be built by increasing the Armor Rating of all armor classes unilaterally, or reducing their Load value. Be careful when creating armor vests much past the existing Heavy armor, though – 3 Armor Rating may not sound like much, but a tough character in Heavy armor is very hard to bring down. Under the existing rules, a person in Heavy armor (not even Very Heavy!), with a Resistance score as high as 17, can take a shot from a missile and stay standing!

Keep in mind that, in a future setting, weapon technology is almost certainly keeping pace to attempt to defeat new personal armor; it may be best to just assume that those differences come out in the wash and use the base statistics, and just give the armor vests different names.

Armor's GP cost is simply Armor Rating; armor has a Load score equal to its Armor Rating minus 2 (minimum 0).

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Shields and force fields
On either a personal or vehicular scale, force fields, deflector shields, and similar things have come up in fiction time and time again. If enemies, characters, or personnel end up with a deflector-type device, the rules for it are pretty simple: give the shield its own Resistance score, and an effective Armor Rating of 0. It's essentially an auxiliary Health point; once it takes enough damage to max out its Resistance, the shield fails, and the character becomes vulnerable to damage as normal.

Once depleted, the shield will eventually regenerate; how this happens depends on the shield. The user might need to swap batteries in the device, which takes a few turns of attention, or it may just start to recover power over time. Either way, if the shield comes back online during the same combat or conflict it went down, the user regains the Health point provided by the shield, but retains its total damage; it recovers a certain amount of damage for each turn it charges. In any case, shields fully recover once a combat ends.

If you introduce force shields into the game, you may wish to incorporate them into existing personal armor, or even replace personal armor entirely with force shields. If you incorporate shields into armor, keep in mind that characters essentially have an extra Health point. You may wish to ramp up the number or capability of enemies accordingly; another possibility is to *replace one of the characters' Health points with the force shield.* At that point, you get characters who are only slightly more resilient than normal (since they would have to lose two Health points to suffer a permanent effect), but with a different flavor. That also means that either only Tough-level or higher enemies get shields, or that Mooks with shields are assumed to have their shield overpenetrated and die when they lose their shield Health point.

As requisitioned items, force shields cost 1 GP for every 6 points of shield Resistance.

Custom Gadgets
Rules for custom Gadgets are trickier, given that a Gadget could represent just about anything. You'll largely have to use your judgment on these, but consider two points of advice:

- First, see if an existing Gadget does much the same thing as what you're introducing. An active-camouflage sneaking suit could work the same way as a ghillie suit, for example. If that's the case, just use the existing rules.
- If not, use the existing Gadgets as a guide when creating your own rules. If a gadget can be used as a trap or weapon, only require one roll to set it, and use it as an attack roll when an enemy trips the triggering mechanism. In remaining cases, try not to make your new Gadgets significantly more valuable than the ones already listed; they're supposed to be tools that can be used in unusual situations, not an all-purpose mission-defeating monster. Also try to avoid a gadget that duplicates the Core Ability of an Archetype; a Data Uplink that allows a character to hack into any device automatically kind of defeats the purpose of the 1337 h4x0r's B4d455 R1g, for example. Take care not to let anyone's wheelhouse get dominated by a choice anyone can take.

Gear in historical settings
If your setting takes place in the past, some gadgets, weapons, and armor may not make sense for the time. For example, in a World War II or Vietnam-era setting, personal armor was largely limited to flak vests designed to stop slow-moving shrapnel, and provided little to no benefit against bullets. Cell phones and whisper radios didn't exist – in fact, radios in general were very heavy devices; there was usually a "radio man" in a platoon to help the unit commander keep in contact with headquarters. Homing weapons hadn't been invented yet. If a weapon, armor type, or gadget doesn't make sense in the context of your historical period, either remove it or adjust its functionality to match. We could take the whisper radio gadget, for example, and make it into a full radio set; it's really heavy (Load +1), but it keeps you in contact with headquarters and other people who have radios, and could allow characters to snoop on enemy communications.

If you need to adjust, add to, and delete from the Gear lists to match your setting, you may want to produce a list yourself; then, present the modified list to your players in place of the list in this manual to minimize confusion. Don't forget that if options become limited, you may need to adjust the number of Gear Points you provide to the players. For example, in the WWII setting we just detailed, no one will have armor, and the weapons they carry are largely limited to single-shot rifles and SMGs, barring someone like a Soldier Archetype with an automatic rifle or bazooka; a military-level equipment list would be more like 5-6 GP (3 for the SMG or rifle and grenades, 2 or 3 for Gadgets).

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Custom Archetypes

For the purposes of most hardcore, contemporary-setting action movies, we like to think we covered all the bases with the existing Archetypes. It's possible that your game may desire a character that isn't represented here; usually, someone like that has a skillset well outside the norm. For example, a diver may have all kinds of unique skills in the water. The best we can do with the existing rule set is the *Athlete* Boost, which doesn't quite get the point across. If someone really wants to play an unusual character, you may consider building a custom Archetype. To do that:

1) Determine whether a custom Archetype is actually necessary. Remember, an Archetype is based on what a character does on screen, not necessarily their career or other component of their identity. (Plenty of police officers could be Gunslingers, Wheelmen, or Tactical Commanders, for example.) A starfighter pilot, like Wedge Antilles from the original *Star Wars* trilogy, could ostensibly have his own Archetype. But really, a coat of paint over the Wheelman would do just fine – call him a Fighter Jockey or whatever you like, but the Archetype's skills remain the same. Indiana Jones, whose ostensible claim to fame is as an archaeologist, does a lot more than that on camera, and is, in general, a rough-and-tumble explorer. It's a little loose of an interpretation, but his eye for fine detail may well cement him as an Eagle Eye, with Boosts like *Athlete, Acrobat,* and *Black belt.*

2) If an existing Archetype comes close, but doesn't quite capture the concept, you could modify an existing Archetype to match. In the case of Indiana Jones, we could modify the Eagle Eye and call it "Adventurer" by swapping out the sniping specialty with something more appropriate, like an ability relating to archaeology and artifacts, and/or some kind of bonus to survival skills in a hostile environment. Again, though, remember that the core of the game is an action adventure; bonuses to researching dusty tomes on an artifact in a library aren't all that useful. If we instead say that the Adventurer can, upon examining an artifact briefly, know what it is, who built it, who's interested in it, and where they can find more information, we would provide a ready place for scene hook after scene hook, and make the character awesome at the same time!

3) If you do need a custom Archetype, you'll need to determine at least two Core Abilities for it. These are the unique skills the Archetype brings to the table that *no one else does*. This raises two very important points.
   - First, remember that Core Abilities stack with Boosts. The reason the Gunslinger gets Core Abilities that increase his capability with pistols, and has Boosts that increase those further, is that the Gunslinger cannot be topped at close combat with handguns. The Shadow and Wheelman get bonuses to stealth and driving, respectively, because when they attempt something, it's usually over the top and carries a high Target Number; without that bonus, they'd be hard pressed to bring their skills into play. Don't just give an Archetype a die bonus to an ability because they're good at it; you can often end up in situations where the character cannot possibly miss a task roll. Winning is fun, sure, but real excitement comes from overcoming adversity – that's where we see a character truly shine.
   - The other type of Core Ability is what essentially amounts to a special power. The Eagle Eye gets more detail on a successful roll to perceive than any other Archetype; the Sapper carries a Toolkit allowing him to produce improvised gadgets using parts that don't belong together; the Field Medic can restore Health Points. *Calling something out as a special ability by definition excludes other characters from doing it!* In most cases, this is what we want – Core Abilities are supposed to be an Archetype's wheelhouse – but you don't want to close characters off from performing some kind of a mundane task. Spell out how your new Archetype does whatever *better* than everyone else; how they're truly superior to the average person.

   Of course, make sure the Archetype's Core Abilities are balanced with the other Archetypes. They should be neither superior nor inferior. If players have a hard time deciding whether they want to choose your new Archetype over one of the other, already existing ones, you've hit the right power level.

4) Often, you can stop there. The existing Archetypes have a wide array of Boosts that can usually fit any need that's practical in any of the action subgenres, and the player can pick from those. If the Archetype has some way they can improve that is relevant to the type of game we're playing, and that isn't already covered by an existing Boost, consider providing a new list of five Boosts for your custom Archetype.

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Boosts should:

- Not already be in another Archetype's list. Remember that a character can only take a Boost once. In many cases on the existing lists, there are Boosts that could easily belong to multiple Archetypes; the Soldier, for example, is usually a formally-trained soldier or paramilitary trooper (SWAT, militia, etc.). A core component of most military training is "combatives", or unarmed and close-quarters combat techniques. The Soldier Archetype doesn't have these on their Boost list, though, because they're (slightly) more appropriate to the Iron Hand and Weapon Master. That doesn't mean the character can't take them! If you assign a Boost to an Archetype that does the same thing as one of the existing ones, a player can take both of them and stack bonuses, which is generally something you don't want. Advancement is intended to make a character more versatile, not necessarily more powerful.
- Be balanced against existing Boosts. Boosts provide either a +1 bonus to a roll directly related to combat (attack/defense), a +1 (or rarely a situational +2) bonus to the application of a non-combat skill, negates some or all disadvantage penalties in a particular situation, or some minor special ability that gives the character additional flexibility.
- Say something about the Archetype, while still being something a member of another Archetype would find useful. As mentioned above, Boosts are a statement about what a typical member of the Archetype excels in. A "full" Soldier, for example, excels with a variety of weapons, so it makes sense that they have a lot of combat-related Boosts; however, a number of other characters may have an interest in Boosts like *Longarm marksman* and *Machine gunner*. Meanwhile, the Sapper works with improvised mechanical systems, so the *Improv combatant* Boost is right at home; a Weapon Master, though, could also make very good use of that ability.

Adjusting Archetypes for setting

The existing Archetypes are a good standard set for most games, but there are a few that won't be relevant, or may need adjustment, based on the setting for the game. For example, characters like the Gunslinger, Smooth Operator, and possibly the Iron Hand and Weapon Master may be less relevant in a hardcore military action setting, like *Predator* or *Black Hawk Down*. Similarly, the 1337 h4x0r doesn't really have much use in settings before about 1980, since computers (especially ones with remote networking capability) wouldn't be in very common use at the time, if they existed at all. If an Archetype is out of place for your setting, just don't put the playbook down at the start of the game; the option becomes unavailable.

You may also wish to adjust existing Archetypes to match your setting — if so, follow the rules above for customizing Archetypes, whether you're just giving them a new coat of paint or changing them entirely. Changing the names and descriptions can render your setting a flavor all its own! In a steampunk-flavored game, for example, you could end up with the Duelist (Gunslinger), Elite Clacker (a modified 1337 h4x0r), Dilettante (Smooth Operator), Machinist (Sapper), and so on. Same schtick (for the most part), different name.

Custom Enemies

Not all enemies in action films are human. Movies like *Predator*, the *Terminator* series, *Underworld*, and so on feature opposition with some bizarre special abilities, whether alien or supernatural in nature. Robots, androids, and drones are commonplace. And every now and again, a big boss decides to jump into a nearby battle mech and take on the team singlehandedly. Here are a few rules for handling that.

Vehicles versus automata

How the stats of a vehicle are handled depends on whether the vehicle is piloted, either in person or remotely. A human-piloted vehicle or drone has no statistics itself. A car doesn't have a **Strength** score, for example. When using a vehicle, the operator's stats are the ones considered; when evading a rocket fired at his Bugatti Veyron, Darius uses his own **Speed** score. Similarly, Ramirez uses his **Perception** score to attack when using an FAV's heavy machine gun turret.

However, the UCAV that Aleph-null hijacked in the example in **1337 h4x0r** under **Archetypes** was fully autonomous, and made its own rolls. As it stands, there currently isn't a fully autonomous military robot known to modern science; they're all piloted remotely by a human operator observing either through a camera, or nearby in person. In near-future settings, or even contemporary ones with super-science aspects, though, these types of fully autonomous vehicles do indeed exist. These units, then, get their own stat scores – **Speed** for its ability to move quickly and evade attack, **Perception** its ability to detect stimuli (and react to them), and **Aptitude** its onboard AI when making deductions (rather than simply following programming). **Strength** doesn't really make much sense for an automated drone, so ignore it; any actions that would require **Strength** use **Speed** instead. The automaton's Resistance value is determined as normal for a vehicle (independent of **Strength**).

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The lines start to blur when we consider heavy CQC attacks performed by a vehicle. In countless anime series (or for that matter, *Transformers* episodes) we see a hulking mech bring a giant sword or axe to bear on its opposition. However, giving a hulking monstrosity an appropriate **Strength** score (probably somewhere like +6 or +8) would make dodging such attacks essentially impossible. If your vehicle can perform CQC attacks other than simple ramming:

- Is the attack's quickness and power determined by the user's own physical strength somehow (like an exoskeleton whose servos provide a multiplier for the pilot's raw strength)? If so, use the pilot's **Strength** score.
- If the attack is purely a remote action – a pilot moving a joystick or pulling a lever – use the pilot's **Speed** for the attack roll.

Supernatural powers

The products of some kind of alien physiology, mutant DNA, magic, psionics, or super-science can result in attacks and abilities not accounted for elsewhere in this manual. Here are a few, and some suggested ways to handle them.

- *Invisibility:* Via cloaking device, magic, or excellent natural camouflage. In nature, truly invisible objects simply don't exist; they violate the laws of physics. Not to mention, it would be essentially impossible to defend against the attack of an invisible person, and having a character just have to stand there and get their skull beaten in because they have literally no chance just sucks. Cloaking devices are in development in the real world, but they rely on bending light waves, using cameras to project imagery on the opposite side of an object, and similar scientific tricks. To model this (and to give characters a fighting chance), an invisible character gains serious advantage (+4) on any rolls made to hide from sight – this decreases to advantage (+2) if moving quickly. By extension, the cloaked or invisible character gains advantage (+2) on attacks and defenses, since they need to move in either case.
- *Regeneration*: Some supernatural creatures (werewolves, vampires, etc.) in fiction have supernatural regenerative powers. If you have such creatures in your game, treat regeneration the same way we handled force shields – after a while, Damage taken starts to bleed off, and lost Health points recover over time. (This gives players an opportunity to beat down a vampire and escape successfully, only to have it show up again later!)
    - If the creature has a vulnerability to a certain type of damage, when it loses a Health point to that type of damage, it doesn't come back. These are treated as normal wounds. Damage is incidental flesh wounds and glancing blows, and these scar over and recover as normal.
- *Magic and psionics:* If opposition shows up that has the power to generate attacks with the power of its mind, it uses **Aptitude** to generate these effects, and as attack rolls against opponents. Treat the attacks the same way you normally would. Characters defend against effects that attack an opponent's mind directly, like fear or mind control, with **Aptitude**. Each turn, a controlled character has the opportunity to either attempt to influence his actions, or attempt to break the mind control altogether, by making another **Aptitude** vs. **Aptitude** roll. (Be careful on this point – most players really don't enjoy having their character usurped like this. Another possibility is to give the players an active choice by leaving their actions in their hands, and tempting them with rewards – attempt to fight the mind control, or, if they go along with the attacker's desires and act it out well, take a Badass Point for the trouble!)

Creature attack forms

Natural and supernatural creatures can have a variety of attacks, ranging from a simple punch for a humanoid, to claws, teeth, stingers, or even ranged darts or similar attacks. The possibilities are endless. To determine the Power of a creature's "natural weapons", figure out a roughly equivalent CQC weapon, and increase that weapon's Power score by 2 to 4 if they're unusually potent or big. A zombie's claws are a fair bit like a knife; that would be Power 4. But say we're dealing with a full-size dragon instead of a zombie – a dragon is pretty big, and his claws are more like sharpened forklift teeth than knives, so they'd hit at greater power, say Power 8. Similarly, a dragon's tail sweep is like a staff on a larger scale, so Power 6 with the Sweeping tag is a good approximation; it isn't a killing machine so much as an area-clearing attack.

Some creatures can carry poisons or virulent diseases, which are delivered with an attack from a piercing or slashing natural attack (claws, bites, stingers, etc.) If a character is hit by the attack, the poison takes effect.

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Setting enemy stats

Now that we've set up all of the special cases, how do we establish the stats for a monster, drone, or other unusual foe? Think about the rough power level of your opponent, the same way we determined stats for human enemies; creatures and drones, the same as humans, can be Mooks, Elites, Bosses, or Masterminds. Those provide rough ranges for these values. Take, for example, your average zombie:

Zombie (Mook)
ST +2 **SP** -1 **PC** -1 **AP** -2
Health 1 Resist 14
Armor 1

Attacks/"Equipment":
Strike (dmg 6, Quiet)
Bite (must grab first; Quiet, dmg 8 plus *Tissue necrosis* to affected area)
"Concealable armor" (tough skin; AR 1)

Tactics:

- Mindlessly charge the nearest human and strike
- Grab and tackle, then bite

We can scale this up to beefy alien squad leaders:

Alien Lieutenant (Elite, Tactical Commander)
ST +1 **SP** +1 **PC** +1 **AP** +3
Health 3 Resist 11
Armor 2
Abilities / Boosts: Follow my lead, Tactical analysis, Motivator, Fifty moves ahead, Unbreakable

Attacks/Equipment:
Claw (dmg 5, Quiet)
Ice needle accelerator (dmg 8, Autofire, Short range)
Acid thrower (dmg 10, Spreading, Short range, Continuous)
Light armor (carapace; AR 2)

Tactics:

- Predict enemy patterns, direct forces to engage
- Stand at the front of a battle, moralize allies
- Cover allies; prioritize protecting allies over attacking

The alien has some unusual weapons, but we pretty easily used equipment from the standard equipment list. The ice needle accelerator is just a Short-range assault rifle, and the Acid thrower is a "semi-automatic" (i.e. not Autofire) flamethrower with a different flavor. The basis of those two enemies, though, is just the set of guidelines for a Mook and an Elite, respectively. Necessarily, a more powerful character will be more important. *Despite appearances*, if an enemy is less important to the story, their stats are low, so they can get shot, stabbed, or punched and out of the way; if an enemy is more important, they have higher stats so they can challenge the players and have some staying power. That is to say, an enemy that looks outwardly the same can have a variety of stat scores – a velociraptor could be kind of a chump in a game that evokes the kind of "dinosaurs are the enemy troops" attitude of, for example*, Dino Crisis* or *Turok*. On the other hand, a velociraptor who is a wily predator tracking the players through the jungle and striking when least expected, like in *Jurassic Park*, could be a Tough, Elite, or possibly even a Boss!

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Final Thoughts

Above all, keep in mind what we're here to do – tell an awesome, riveting action story, starring protagonists that can handle *just about* anything. *Measure of a Badass* was written to do just that; provide enough structure to get the game moving and resolve any questions or uncertainties that come up in play, and then get out of the way. If the game gets in the way of the fun, I've failed you. While the game isn't zero-prep, it is low-prep, and the mission structure is designed, again, to give the game structure and to get out of the way. There's a smooth, rapid flow to a good *Badass* game, and it's one I hope evokes the way that action cinema flows.

I have a lot of opinions about what makes a good game. *Badass* should reveal some of them, but it's not the one true way. It's just a way I like a lot, and wanted to share with you. But there's one central philosophy that I hold above all else in game design and game play, of all sorts, and I hope it rings true here:

Everyone is here to have fun. In deference to this, *everything else be damned.*

Enjoy the game, everyone.

- Jim Dagg

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Apocalypse World
D20 Modern
Ars Magica
Numenera
Dungeon World
the collected works of John Harper
Dogs in the Vineyard
Ammo and *Amm02*
Spycraft (versions 1 and 2)
Anima Prime
Feng Shui
Fate Core and *Accelerated Edition*
Stars Without Number
The Mountain Witch
Wushu
Old School Hack

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Media Influences *(because without action media, what would I base this game on, for heaven's sake)*

Just Cause 2
MacGyver
First Blood Part II
Firefly
Rainbow Six (novel, games)
Noir (anime series)
Mission: Impossible
G.I. Joe (TV series, novels)
the works of John Woo
The Delta Force
Knight Rider
Ghost Recon series
Lupin the 3rd
Tales from the Cobra Wars
the James Bond films
The A-Team television series
The Terminator
Hackers
Predator
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex
others too numerous to mention

"Learn what it is you actually want, concentrate effort on getting it, accept no substitutes. Then invite others to join in."
- *Erik Weissengruber*

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MEASURE OF A BADASS

Archetype: _____

Name _____

Core Abilities

Details/Connections

Conditions
may provide advantage or disadvantage, or limit your options

Evolution Options

Badass Points
spend to improve a roll by one step, take an action now, take an action retroactively, or establish an advantageous narrative detail

Strength (ST)
physical power, endurance
heavy melee, Resistance

Speed (SP)
agility and fine dexterity
light melee, physical defense

Perception (PC)
ranged attacks, awareness, attention to detail

Aptitude (AP)
mental tasks, calculated thought
willpower

Mission Gear Points

Net Load
Armor Load + # of Heavy items - **ST**

Health Points

Resistance
Total = 8 + 3 x **ST** + Other

Damage

Armor
Rating
Load

Boosts

Taken	
Taken	
Taken	
Taken	
Taken	
Taken	

Gadgets

Weapons and Attacks

Weapon	Range	Power
Roll	Tags	
Weapon	Range	Power
Roll	Tags	
Weapon	Range	Power
Roll	Tags	
Weapon	Range	Power
Roll	Tags	
Weapon	Range	Power
Roll	Tags	

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Measure of a Badass: Rules and Mechanics Quick Start

You have four stats, on a scale of -4 to +4 (0 is average):

Strength	Physical power and endurance
Speed	Agility and fine dexterity
Perception	Attention to detail and visual precision
Aptitude	General intelligence and mental resistance

When attempting something with a risk of failure:

Roll 1d10 + **stat** + modifiers.

Your target number is a GM-defined static number or an opposing roll.

Result chart:

Tie, or Win by 1-3	**Hit**; you get what you want
Win by 4+	**Strong hit**; you get what you want and more
Lose by 1-3	**Miss**; you don't get what you want, or get it at a cost
Lose by 4+	**Strong miss**; you don't get what you want, and suffer additional complications

Actions opposed by multiple characters cannot score strong hits/misses.

Badass Points

You earn Badass Points by doing or saying badass things. Anyone else can nominate you; table consensus means you get one. Make sure you nominate other people for Badass Points when they're awesome!

You can spend Badass Points to:

- Improve a die roll result by one step per point (strong miss → miss → hit → strong hit)
- Creative Retcon to do something retroactively
- Take an action immediately, even if it's not your turn
- Establish an advantageous narrative detail

You can't hold more than three Badass Points. Spend liberally.

Earn Badass Points by:

- Trying something bold and potentially crazy
- Viscerally describing an action shot by shot
- Delivering a movie-worthy quip before or after an action
- Coming up with an awesome plan, and then executing it
- Revealing something about your character or her backstory that's immediately pertinent to the situation at hand

Combat

Attacks use different stats depending on circumstances:

CQC, quick/agile	**Speed** or **Strength**
CQC, power	**Strength**
Throwing	**Speed** or **Strength**
Other ranged	**Perception**
Mental	**Aptitude**

Defenses also use a different set of stats:

Avoid physical hit	**Speed**
Resist physical effect	**Strength**
See through a ruse	**Perception**
Willpower	**Aptitude**

You can't attack a target out of your weapon's range.

Health and Injury

Attacks have a Power value equal to their Base Power plus the stat used to attack (not including advantage, Boosts, or other circumstantial bonuses).

When you are hit, you suffer **Damage** equal to the attack's **Power** minus your **Armor Rating**. If your Damage total meets or exceeds your Resistance, you're wounded: mark a Condition appropriate to the wound, mark off a Health point, and clear your Damage total. If you lose all Health points, you are incapacitated.

If you're incapacitated, first aid restores one Health point, but your Damage remains; getting hit again means you're back down. Otherwise, first aid resets your Damage total to zero.

If you aren't sure what to do:

- Use your archetype abilities
- Reframe a challenge to suit your skillset
- Help another character or the team
- Ask for suggestions/hints
- Look around, or go on Overwatch

Weapon **tags** change how a weapon works:

Autofire	Can attack everyone in an arc; +2 to suppressive/covering fire
Spreading	You can attack two adjacent targets; ignore first -2 in penalties due to imprecision/concealment
Radius	Attack hits everyone within a few meters
Duration	Attack lasts 3 turns
Continuous	Attack's effects repeat for 3 turns
Stun	Stun for one turn
Disorient	Disorient (-2 to all rolls) for one turn (or 3 turns with the Duration tag)
Concealment	Attack produces smoke or other concealment
Homing	Lock on for +4; -2 (or can't fire) if no lock
Indirect	Can make indirect fire; you take -2 instead of -4 when attacking a target you can't see
Heavy	**SP** -1 while carrying
Reload	You must reload the weapon after each shot; -2 to physical actions performed on the same turn (including attacks, but not defenses)
Limited	Ammo is heavy – you may run out after a few shots
Quiet	Attacks make little, inconspicuous noise

Special actions in combat:

- **Aim**: Aim at a target, do nothing else. Your next attack against that target gets +2 if your shot is still good.
- **Dual attack**: Use two weapons against the same target. No mechanical effect unless you have an ability that says otherwise.
- **Split attack**: Use two weapons against two different targets. -2 to the attack.
- **Guard**: +2 on defense rolls this turn, but do nothing else.
- **Overwatch**: Declare your intentions but don't act. At any time before your next turn, interrupt action in progress to follow through.
- **Target weak point**: Attack a known weak point. You may suffer disadvantage, but gain special benefits if you hit.

GM Quick Reference

Your roles:

- Director: Plan missions, adjudicate rules, make the action blow the audience away
- Cameraman: *Honestly and completely* describe what the players see and hear, *as long as it's relevant to the action*
- Extras: Portray non-player characters and world; contrast and support, not overshadow, the players.
- Script assistant: Help discover, but *do not pre-determine*, what will happen during play; finding out where the story ultimately goes is a collaborative effort between you and the players

When rolling dice, always determine:

- Intent
- Opposition
- Stats
- Target Number or advantage/disadvantage
- and at least have an idea of a possible complication. If a player asks what the complication is before you roll, decide now.

Only roll dice if an action is important to the story, the outcome is in question, and there is some meaningful risk for failure. If no complication makes sense (or the complication doesn't imply the action's failure), the action succeeds automatically.

Actions, Complications, and Benefits

There are four basic types of actions. If an action doesn't fit one of these, it's either insignificant or needs to be broken down.

Overcome an obstacle or task

On a hit, you accomplish your goal. (Remember that complicated or long-duration tasks take multiple steps/have multiple objectives)

Complications:

- Need more time (or another turn)
- Run low or out of resources
- Need something you don't have – can't try again until you get it
- Take an injury
- Attract unwanted attention
- Hasty, unreliable work; possible disadvantage

Strong hit benefits:

- Take less time
- Use fewer (or no) resources
- Superb work: works better/longer, get advantage

Set up an action

On a hit, you (or an ally) get advantage (+2) on one future action that the setup helps.

Complications:

- Expose/produce unexpected complication; -2 instead
- Approach won't work; have to do it another way
- Expose yourself to danger/risks of the action

Strong hit benefits:

- +4 or automatic hit instead
- Lasting advantage while setup remains relevant

Make an attack

On a hit, you hit your target with the appropriate results. On a miss, the attack misses, is dodged, resisted, or is otherwise ineffective. Other complications happen on strong miss or player/GM agreement.

Complications:

- Enemy gets to cover or a better position
- Attack is less effective, dealing reduced damage (don't choose this unless the target can't possibly escape the attack)
- Overextend/unbalance/poor position: -2 to future rolls while relevant
- Caught in the attack, take same injury (only if feasible)
- Ally caught in the attack, takes same injury (only if feasible and ally agrees)
- Enemy has a free opportunity to counter-attack
- Need to reload, or run out of ammo (particularly if weapon has Limited tag)

Strong hit benefits:

- Set up allies' follow-up attack, granting advantage if setup is relevant
- Attack hits harder, increasing the effect of a successful hit
- Opportunity for an immediate follow-up attack (same or different intent, same or different target)
- Secondary effect (disarm, knockdown, stagger)

Obtain information

On a hit, you notice or recall some kind of fine detail that connects the dots about a question; what's about to happen, who's in control, the presence of something that isn't as it appears, and so on. (Just seeing/hearing something is automatic. Do not make rolls in secret for the players for this.)

Complications:

- Miss something important; you need to connect the dots yourself
- Attract unwanted attention
- Enemy uses time to find something out our act against you

Strong hit benefits:

- Advantage forward to acting on information
- More info, second, deeper question

Target Numbers

Who has a 50/50 shot at success?	*TN*
Just about anyone (-2)	4
An average person (+0)	6
Someone trained, or a natural (+2)	8
An expert (+4)	10
Only the best of the best (+6)	12

Scene Flow

- Establishing Shot: What's around? People, places, things? Chekov's Guns?
- Setup Phase: If the players are in control, what's their approach? If not, where are they and how do they react?
- Action Phase: Resolve the main conflict of the scene
- Resolution Phase: Where are they going next? Next objective? How do their adversaries react?

Remember: Start the scene when something interesting is about to happen; end it when something interesting has happened (or when nothing interesting is happening).

Enemies

Enemy Types and Statistics

Type	*Health*	*Resistance*	*Total Stats*	*Boosts*	*Archetypes*	*Evolutions*	*Max Gear Points*	*Threat Points*
Mook	1	1	-1 to +2	0	0	0	mission	0
Tough	1	10 + 5 x **ST**	+3 to +5	0 to 2	0	0	mission plus 2	0
Elite	2 or 3	8 + 3 x **ST**	+4 to +6	2 to 3	1	0 or 1	mission plus 2	1
Boss	3 or 4	8 + 3 x **ST**	+5 to +7	3 to 4	1	1 to 2	any	3
Mastermind	5+	8 + 3 x **ST**	+8 or higher (can go above +4)	4+	any relevant	any relevant	any	5

Archetype Powers

Gunslinger
+1 to attacks with single pistol
Ignore split attack penalties with pistols
+1 Power with pistols, +2 for dual pistols vs. same target
+1 to defense if moved since last turn

Soldier
Free Soldier boost
Ignore first -1 of Speed penalties from gear
+2 Gear Points for weapons or armor

Eagle Eye
+2 to scouting, extra information on success
While making single-shot ranged attack from stationary position with a firearm or bow:
- +1 to attack
- +1 range category (Short -> Long -> Extreme)
- Ignore first -2 from targeting a weak point

Shadow
Acrobatics defy physics, no noise on hit
+2 to acrobatics
+2 to sneaking

Wheelman
Sweet custom ride
Stunts in vehicles
Can drive any vehicle, familiar or not

Iron Hand
Special unarmed attacks (stun, throw, limb lock, pin), can choose to injure or not with any attack
Unarmed Power = 6
+2 to breaking stuff

Weapon Master
With blades:
- +4 Power vs. objects, ignore armor
- Interrupt attack to counter-attack, but lose next turn

With bludgeons:
- +1 Power
- +2 to breaking stuff

With polearms:
- +1 to CQC defense
- Can't be flanked in CQC
- +2 to keeping enemies at bay

Field Medic
Quick heal: 1-turn first aid
Field surgery: +1 Health given time/task success
Pharmaceutical infusion: one of:
- Cure poison/disease
- Apply positive or negative condition for a scene or two
- -2 to all rolls for 3 turns
- -1 Health (KO or lethal)

Sapper
Improvised construction:
- Quickly build stuff from spare parts
- Quickly repair something with spare parts
- Find a critical part, remove it to deal -1 Health
- Temporarily augment a mechanical device

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Can hack anything, familiar or not
Custom high-performance PC

Smooth Operator
The Look (instant, short-term dupe/intimidation)
Call contacts between scenes to get stuff

Tactical Commander
Team rolls use Tac/Com's roll if higher
Can spend Badass Points on behalf of ally
Start with 2 BP, can hold 4
Tactical Analysis: spend one turn to inference detailed information on encounters

Threat Points
Spend enemy threat points to:
- Deal 50% more damage
- Take a free action
- Use a lv. 6/7 attack

Use mission threat points to:
- Have reinforcements or trouble show up that wasn't the result of a roll or inaction
- Use an enemy Threat Point power

Boosts Quick Reference

Gunslinger

- **Akimbo:** +1 to Power w/ two pistols
- **Pistol marksman:** +1 to pistol attacks
- **Collateral damage**: Can shoot environment to break things; +1 to roll
- **Never stop moving**: +1 to defense rolls in open terrain
- **Contact shot**: Can use single shot attack as melee weapon; +2 power

Soldier

- **Volume of fire:** +1 power, +1 suppression/covering fire w/Autofire
- **Heavy weapon expert:** +1 to attack rolls using heavy weapons, no penalties to indirect fire
- **Longarm marksman:** +1 to single-shot longarm attacks
- **Grenadier:** +1 to hand grenade attacks, ignore cover
- **Athlete:** +1 to rolls related to athletics and resisting fatigue.

Eagle Eye

- **Scout**: +1 to scouting rolls
- **Piercing sight:** No disadvantage from darkness or concealment
- **Aim small, miss small:** +4 instead of +2 from aiming.
- **Close combat shooter:** Can shoot in CQC at no penalty
- **Be the bullet:** Ignore first -2 from cover or rapid movement

Shadow

- **Sneak**: +1 to stealth
- **Acrobat:** +1 to acrobatics, +2 AR to falls
- **Assassin:** +50% dmg to sneak attacks
- **Fast hands:** Quick sleight of hand, +1 to rolls
- **Technophile:** Start each mission with 3 free Gadgets

Wheelman

- **Driver:** +1 to driving a type of vehicle
- **Mechanic:** +1 to repairing a type of vehicle.
- **Scrapmaker:** +1 attack, +2 dmg vs. vehicles.
- **Turned in:** +1 AR for everyone in a vehicle you drive
- **One hand on the wheel:** Drive and do something else w/o penalty

Iron Hand

- **Black belt:** +1 atk and Power unarmed
- **Unbreakable:** +1 to Armor Rating and +1 to endurance-related **ST** rolls (resisting poison, disease, suffocation, etc.)
- **Flow like water:** +1 to defense rolls against CQC attacks.
- **Opportunist:** +1 to attack rolls (armed or not) with an intent other than direct damage – disarm, trip, etc.
- **Zanshin:** You never suffer disadvantage penalties to defense rolls due to being flanked.

Weapon Master

- **Hack and slash:** +1 to CQC attacks.
- **Dodge bullets:** +1 def vs. ranged
- **Archer:** +1 atk w/ bow/crossbow.
- **Art of impalement:** w/ thrown weapons, +1 atk w/**SP**, +2 dmg w/ **ST**
- **Guardian:** Can intercept attacks against a nearby ally w/o using an action

Field Medic

- **First responder**: +1 to first aid and field surgery.
- **Chemist**: +1 to chemistry and biology, recognize bio agents on sight
- **Keep your head down:** +1 to defense rolls if you don't attack
- **Forensic tech:** +1 to forensic analysis, +1 detail
- **Who's Hippocrates?**: Begin with a toxin, enemy rolls to resist poison have +2 TN

Sapper

- **Builder**: +1 to construction/maintenance/repair.
- **Electrician**: +1 to electronics
- **Saboteur**: +1 to demolition/sabotage/disarming bombs
- **Improv combatant**: Improv weapons don't break easily, including Sapper construction and repair; +1 to attacks
- **I've got just the thing:** Can buy gadgets retroactively

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- **Grey hat:** +1 to hacking or recognizing hacking
- **Search-fu:** +1 to research, more precise results
- **Remote procedure call:** +1 to remote commands, atk/def of things you remotely control.
- **Firewall:** +1 to defending against hacking
- **Enigma:** Instantly recognize codes, +1 to rolls w/ them.

Smooth Operator

- **Trustworthy face**: +1 to duplicity/diplomacy; you look easy to trust
- **Crazy eyes:** +1 to intimidation; if you miss, the target is still slightly intimidated but can act freely
- **Always a tell**: GM will tell you if someone's lying and point to a cue or tell, but you have to figure out the truth
- **Stash:** Can have a pistol/knife/grenade sized weapon even if you've been disarmed/frisked
- **Player:** Anyone of the correct sexual persuasion is slightly attracted to you, +1 to use that as leverage

Tactical Commander

- **Danger sense:** GM will tell you if you're about to walk into a trap, but not what it is
- **Supporter:** +4 instead of +2 on successful setup task
- **Walkthrough:** You can roll for a task instead of an ally if you walk them through it
- **Shoot first:** You get a free turn before the first side acts; +2 to actions in that turn
- **Fifty moves ahead:** Spend 1 turn analyzing someone, roll **AP**; GM will tell you what the guy's next couple moves will be

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